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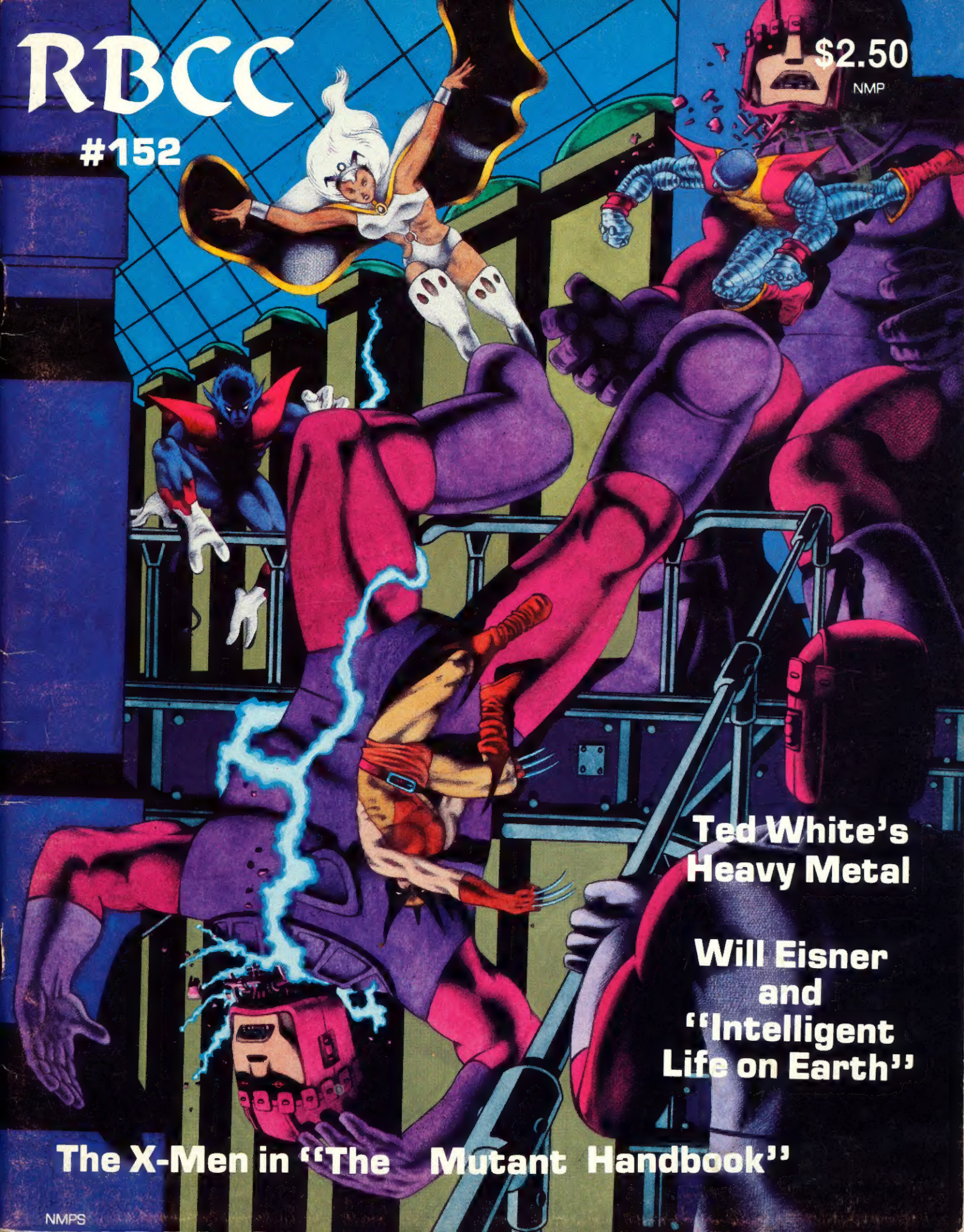

Ted White's Heavy Metal

Will Eisner and "Intelligent Life on Earth"

The X-Men in "The Mutant Handbook"

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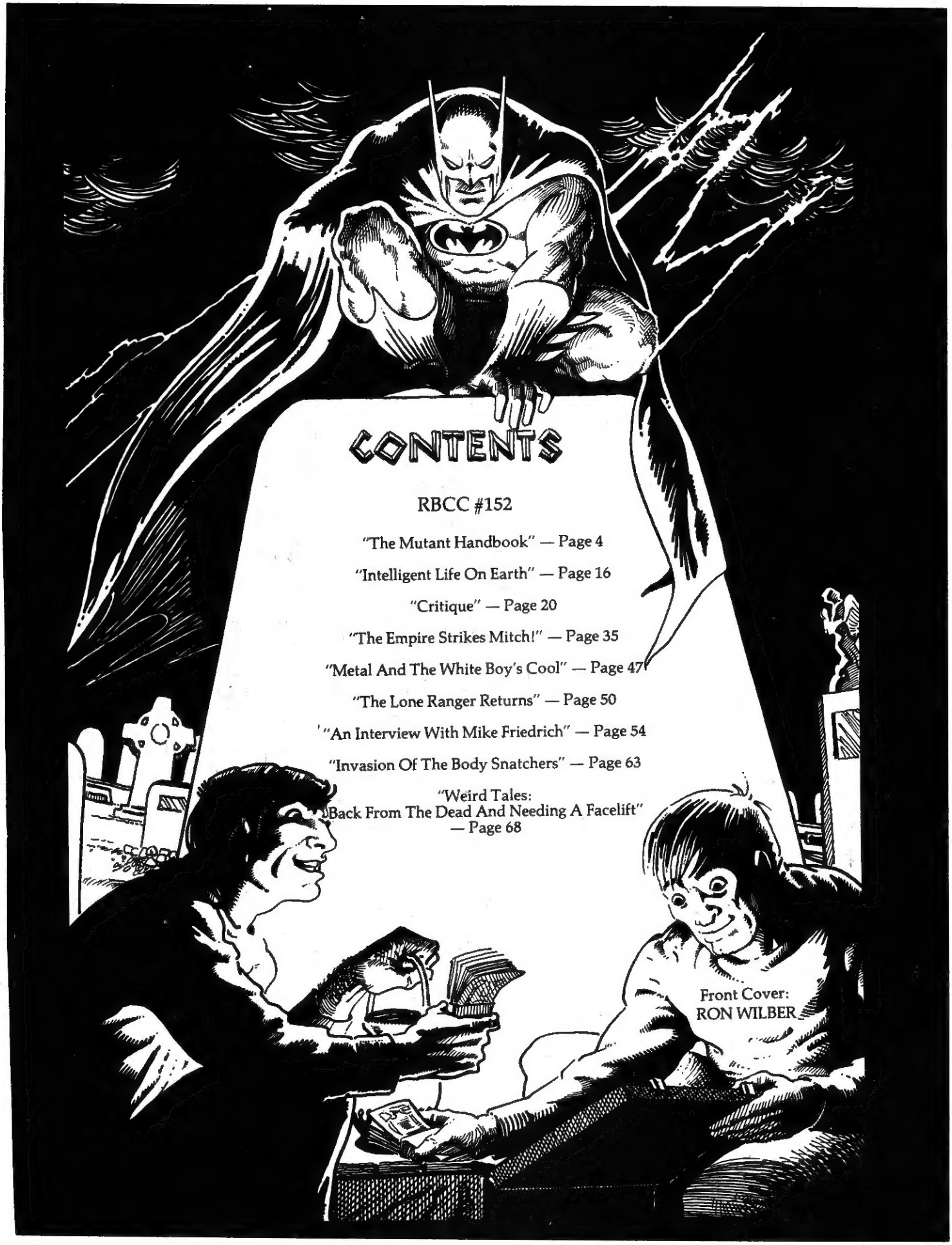

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EDITORIAL

This is the first "New Look" issue of the *RBCC*, because from now on all features in these pages will be typeset. The typesetting is being done by Carol Kalish and Richard Howell (Of NMP), but the layouts will still be done by me, so the *RBCC* will now have a look that combines the best of the old and the new.

You'll notice a lot more use of spot illos in the *RBCC* from now on, and some of these will be by regular contributors, some from *Interfan*, and even some professional cartoons by people like Hugo Award winning artist Bill Rotsler.

The back cover this issue is *Lonny Fawcett's* tongue-in-cheek tribute to the new Flash Gordon motion picture. Lonny explains that even though his art is ordinarily tighter and more realistic, he wanted to capture the comic book feel of the film.

Ken Mitchroney has been doing art for the *RBCC* and for my companion zine *Enterprise Incidents* off and on for about four years now. With this issue Ken returns with a vengeance with page after page of cartoons inspired by *The Empire Strikes Back*. Some of these cartoons almost never saw the light of day because they were stolen and Ken retrieved them only after great effort and a trip to another state where he tracked them down. I guess you know you're getting good when people start stealing your originals.

Way back in *RBCC* #148 I published the first part of "The Mutant Handbook," and this issue I've finally included the second installment which I think you'll like a lot.

Critique is striving valiantly to catch up with everything which the world of fandom, comics and sf has been producing and so this issue has another long installment. This issue introduces another new reviewer in the person of *Robert Strauss* who will be doing many other features for the *RBCC in the near future.*

Before you ask about whatever happened to "The Pertwillaby Papers" (or the *Periwinkle Papers* as some people insist on dubbing it), I'll explain. Don Rosa began the story called "Knighttime" in 1979, and after completing two chapters he landed a job drawing a weekly Saturday newspaper strip called "Captain Kentucky" which uses some of the same characters. Since Don still has a full time job as well, his drawing time is all used up by "Captain Kentucky," so PP has had to suspend for the time being.

I plan to get *RBCC* cranked back up to bimonthly now that someone else handles everything of a non-editorial nature, and it should work out.

See you in the funny papers!

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THE MUTANT HANDBOOK CHAPTER 2

the ZM3·X

THE STRANGEST HEROES OF ALL

© 1979 KURT BUSIEK & SCOTT MCLEOD

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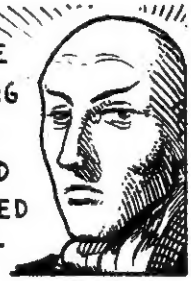
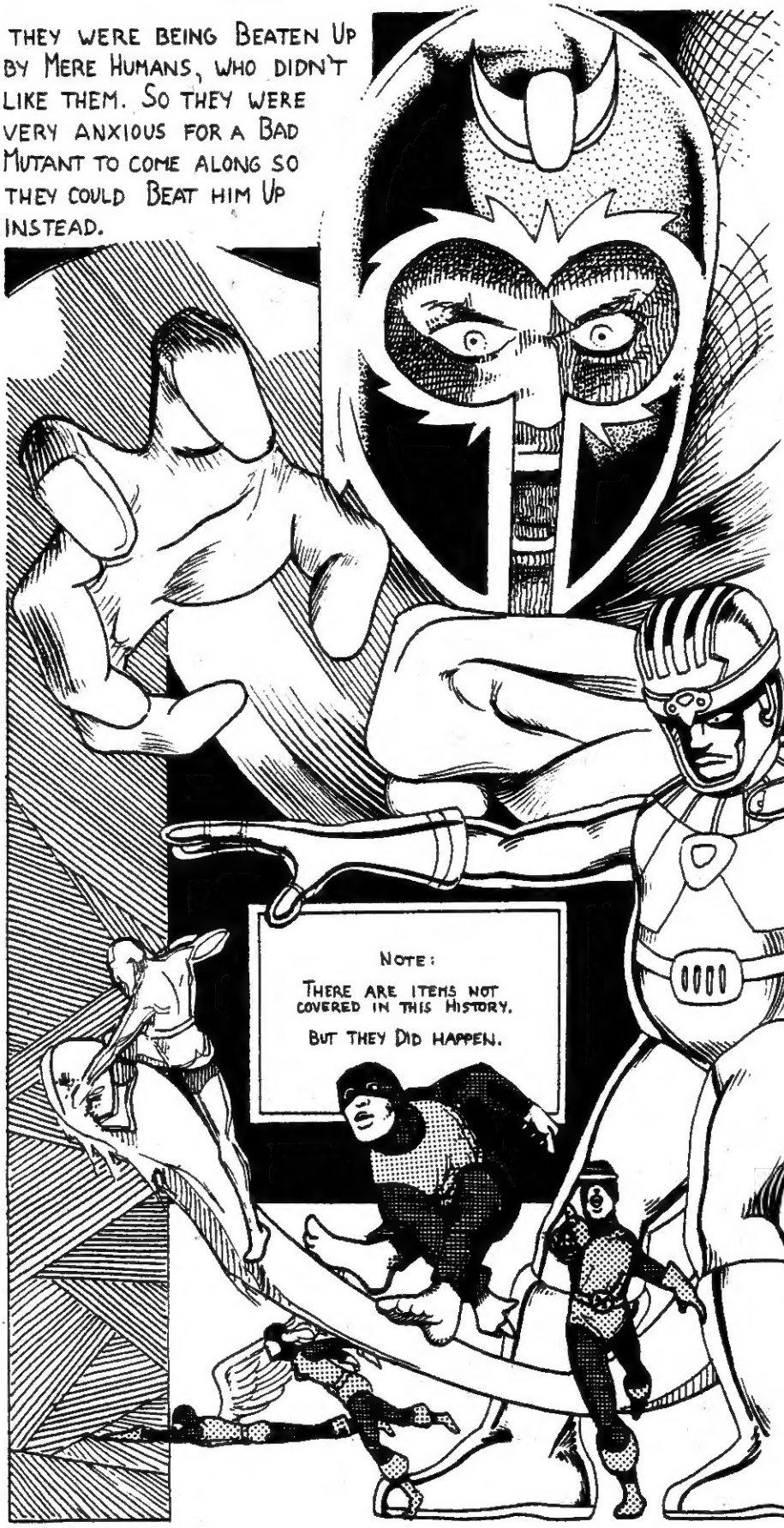
THE X-MEN, BEING THE STRANGEST HEROES OF ALL, HAVE A VERY STRANGE HISTORY. IT BEGINS IN CONFUSION, BECAUSE THE X-MEN DECIDED TO BE MUTANTS, AND TO MAKE ALL THEIR VILLAINS MUTANTS, WHICH MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO TELL WHO IS GOOD AND WHO IS BAD. THEY ALMOST CALLED THEMSELVES "THE MUTANTS", BUT DECIDED NOT TO WHEN MARTIN GOODMAN INSISTED THAT SMALL CHILDREN WOULD BE CONFUSED. THE X-MEN DID NOT WANT TO CONFUSE SMALL CHILDREN, BECAUSE THEY WERE THE ONES WITH THE MONEY.



PROFESSOR XAVIER WAS THE INSTIGATOR OF THE X-MEN, BEING A GOOD MUTANT. HE WAS NOT CONFUSING BECAUSE HE WAS BALD AND HAD MENTAL POWERS AND POINTED EYEBROWS AND THUS WAS OBVIOUSLY A MUTANT. HE FOUND FIVE OTHER MUTANTS, NONE OF WHOM HAD POINTED EYEBROWS, AND ONE OF WHOM HAD MENTAL POWERS, AND BEGAN THE CONFUSION BY INSISTING THAT THEY WERE REALLY GIFTED YOUNGSTERS. BECAUSE THEY DID NOT HAVE ANY BAD MUTANTS TO FIGHT YET, THE X-MEN (OR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS) PRACTICED BY BEATING EACH OTHER UP IN THE DANGER ROOM (OR SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS). WHEN THEY WERE NOT BEATING EACH OTHER UP--

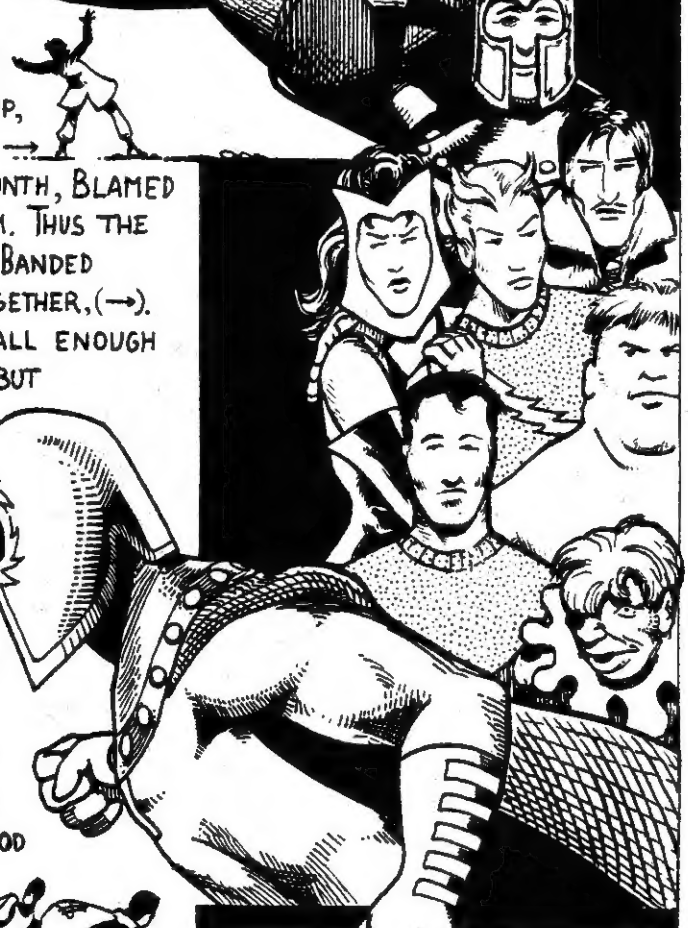


THEY WERE BEING BEATEN UP BY MERE HUMANS, WHO DIDN'T LIKE THEM. SO THEY WERE VERY ANXIOUS FOR A BAD MUTANT TO COME ALONG SO THEY COULD BEAT HIM UP INSTEAD.

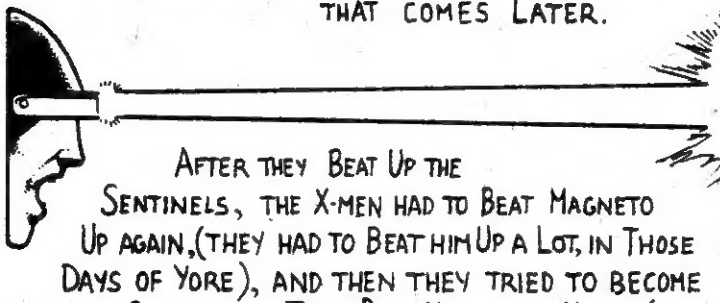
THE FIRST BAD MUTANT CAME ALONG IN 1963. SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT THE FIRST BAD MUTANT WAS AMAHL FAROUK, WHO CAME ALONG IN 1978, BUT 1963 IS FIFTEEN YEARS BEFORE 1978, SO **MAGNETO**, WHO CAME ALONG THEN, IS REALLY THE FIRST. HE IS ALSO THE WORST, AND THEREFORE TOP BAD MUTANT. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY BAD, BECAUSE HE WORE RED AND PURPLE, WHILE THE GOOD MUTANTS WORE BLACK AND YELLOW. (THEY LATER CHANGED TO BLUE AND YELLOW, AND LATER TO MANY DIFFERENT COLORS, BECAUSE IT WAS MORE CONFUSING). MAGNETO WAS ALSO BAD BECAUSE HE TOOK A BASE AWAY FROM THE ARMY SO THE X-MEN COULD GO BEAT HIM UP, AND GIVE IT BACK.

THE REASON THAT SOME MUTANTS WERE GOOD AND SOME WERE BAD IS THAT THEY ARGUED. THE BAD ONES SAID THAT THEY WERE SUPERIOR TO MERE HUMANS, WHICH IS OF COURSE RIGHT, BUT THE SMALL CHILDREN DIDN'T THINK SO. THE GOOD MUTANTS WERE ALSO SUPERIOR, BUT THEY DIDN'T SAY SO, WHICH MAKES THEM GOOD. ALL OF THE MERE HUMANS WERE CONFUSED (EXCEPT THE SMALL CHILDREN, WHO KNEW). THEY (THE MERE HUMANS), THOUGHT THAT THE GOOD MUTANTS WERE BAD, AND THAT THE BAD ONES WERE WORSE. ONE PARTICULARLY CONFUSED HUMAN WAS BOLIVAR TRASK, WHO BUILT SOME BIG ROBOTS. HE NAMED THEM SENTINELS.

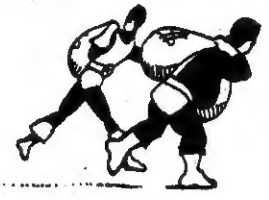
THE SENTINELS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE GOOD, AND BEAT UP THE BAD MUTANTS, BUT THEY WERE REVOLTING. THEY IGNORED BOLIVAR TRASK, AND TRIED TO BEAT UP THE GOOD MUTANTS, WHO THEY THOUGHT WERE BAD. AFTER THE X-MEN BEAT THE SENTINELS UP, THE TOP SENTINEL (THE MASTER MOLD) FELL ON BOLIVAR TRASK. →



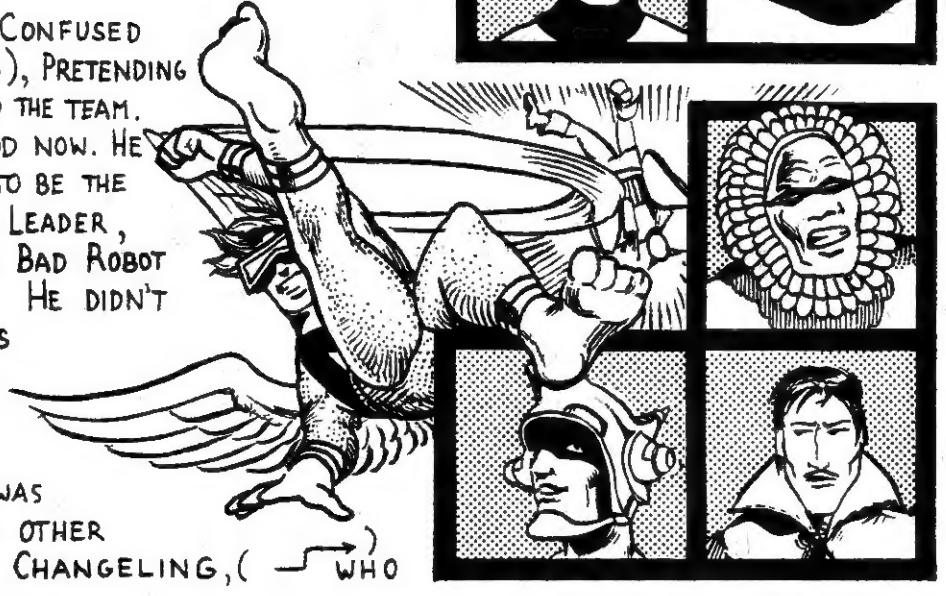
THE MERE HUMANS, WHO WERE GROWING MORE CONFUSED EVERY MONTH, BLAMED THE X-MEN FOR FALLING ON BOLIVAR TRASK, WHICH HAD KILLED HIM. THUS THE SENTINELS WERE EVEN WORSE THE BAD MUTANTS, WHO HAD BANDED TOGETHER AS THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS TO BE BAD TOGETHER, (→). BOLIVAR TRASK HAD A SON NAMED LARRY, WHO WAS NOT A SMALL ENOUGH CHILD TO ESCAPE CONFUSION, AND HE SWORE VENGEANCE, BUT THAT COMES LATER.



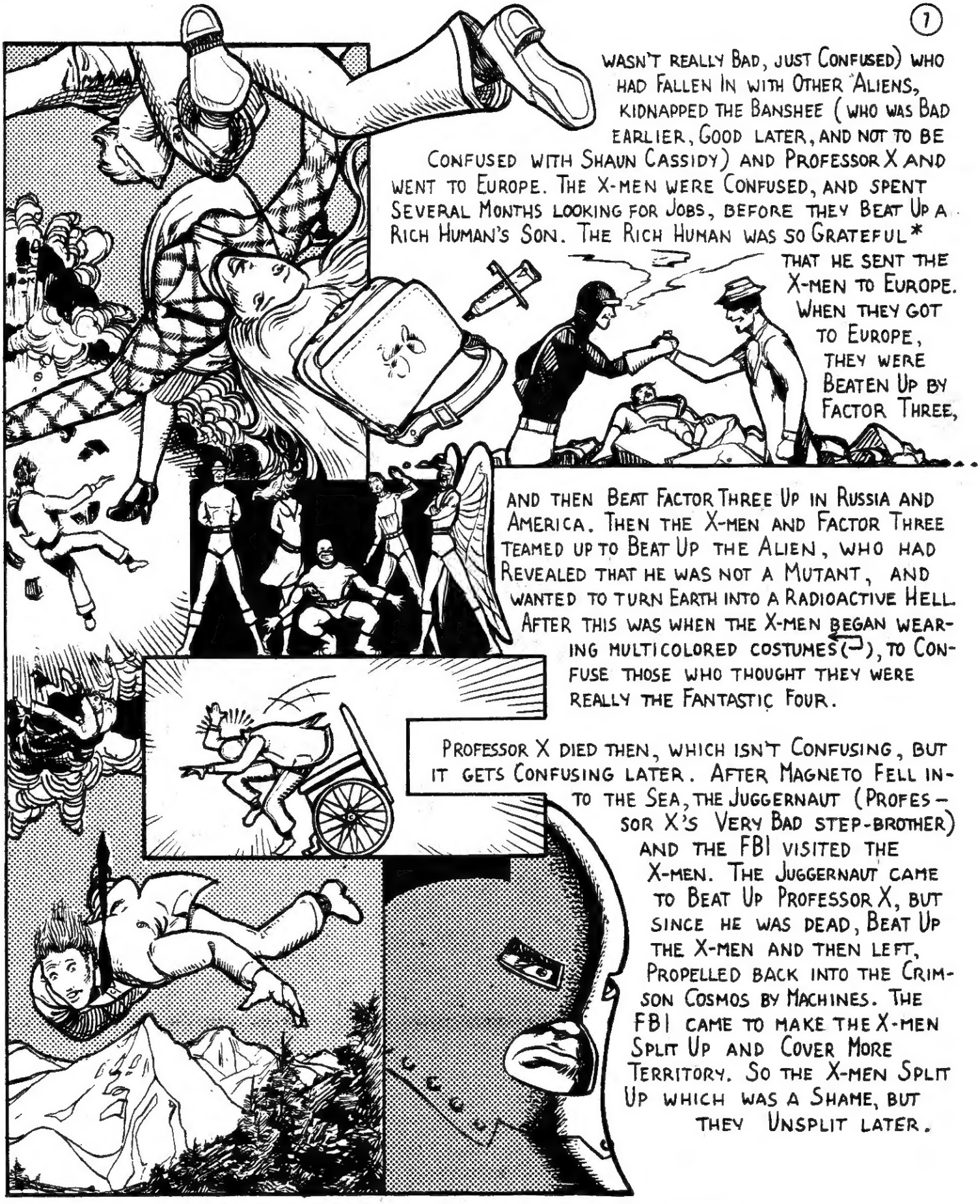
AFTER THEY BEAT UP THE SENTINELS, THE X-MEN HAD TO BEAT MAGNETO UP AGAIN, (THEY HAD TO BEAT HIM UP A LOT, IN THOSE DAYS OF YORE), AND THEN THEY TRIED TO BECOME REALLY CONFUSING. TWO BAD MUTANTS, UNUS (NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH HIS SISTER EUNICE) AND THE BLOB (NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH STEVE MCQUEEN), FELL IN WITH ALIENS AND PRETENDED TO BE BAD GOOD MUTANTS, TO GIVE THE GOOD



MUTANTS A BAD NAME. THEN AN UNDECIDED MUTANT, THE MIMIC (NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE CHAMELEON OR THE CHANGELING), PRETENDING TO BE ALL THE X-MEN AT ONCE, JOINED THE TEAM. HE HAD BEEN BAD BEFORE, BUT WAS GOOD NOW. HE SUCCEEDED SO WELL AT PRETENDING TO BE THE X-MEN THAT HE BECAME THEIR DEPUTY LEADER, AND BEAT UP THE SUPER-ADAPTOID, A BAD ROBOT WHO PRETENDED TO BE THE AVENGERS. HE DIDN'T LIKE THE X-MEN BEING SO GOOD, IT WAS NO FUN TO PRETEND TO BE THEM, SO HE LOST HIS POWERS.



THEN FACTOR THREE, WHICH WAS UNUS AND THE BLOB AGAIN, WITH TWO OTHER MUTANTS (THREE IF YOU COUNT THE CHANGELING, (→ WHO



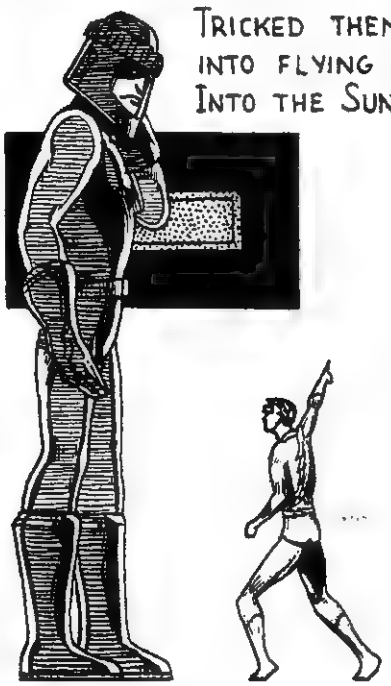
WASN'T REALLY BAD, JUST CONFUSED) WHO HAD FALLEN IN WITH OTHER ALIENS, KIDNAPPED THE BANSHEE (WHO WAS BAD EARLIER, GOOD LATER, AND NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH SHAUN CASSIDY) AND PROFESSOR X AND WENT TO EUROPE. THE X-MEN WERE CONFUSED, AND SPENT SEVERAL MONTHS LOOKING FOR JOBS, BEFORE THEY BEAT UP A RICH HUMAN'S SON. THE RICH HUMAN WAS SO GRATEFUL* THAT HE SENT THE X-MEN TO EUROPE. WHEN THEY GOT TO EUROPE, THEY WERE BEATEN UP BY FACTOR THREE, AND THEN BEAT FACTOR THREE UP IN RUSSIA AND AMERICA. THEN THE X-MEN AND FACTOR THREE TEAMED UP TO BEAT UP THE ALIEN, WHO HAD REVEALED THAT HE WAS NOT A MUTANT, AND WANTED TO TURN EARTH INTO A RADIOACTIVE HELL. AFTER THIS WAS WHEN THE X-MEN BEGAN WEARING MULTICOLORED COSTUMES(⮌), TO CONFUSE THOSE WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE REALLY THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

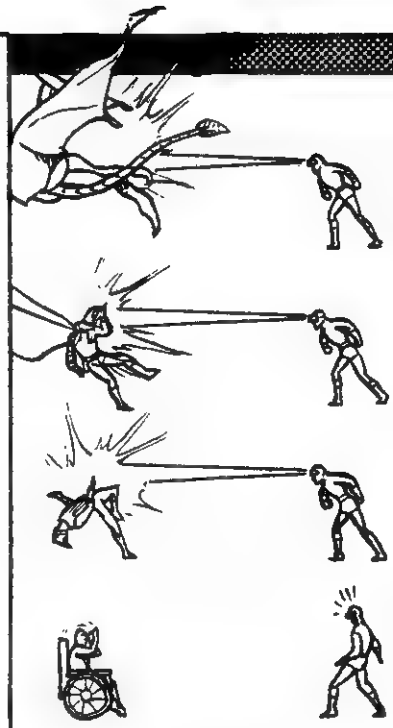
PROFESSOR X DIED THEN, WHICH ISN'T CONFUSING, BUT IT GETS CONFUSING LATER. AFTER MAGNETO FELL INTO THE SEA, THE JUGGERNAUT (PROFESSOR X'S VERY BAD STEP-BROTHER) AND THE FBI VISITED THE X-MEN. THE JUGGERNAUT CAME TO BEAT UP PROFESSOR X, BUT SINCE HE WAS DEAD, BEAT UP THE X-MEN AND THEN LEFT, PROPELLED BACK INTO THE CRIMSON COSMOS BY MACHINES. THE FBI CAME TO MAKE THE X-MEN SPLIT UP AND COVER MORE TERRITORY. SO THE X-MEN SPLIT UP WHICH WAS A SHAME, BUT THEY UNSPLIT LATER.

* THE RICH HUMAN'S SON WAS NOT BAD, JUST CONFUSED. HE NEEDED BEATING UP.

THE ONLY INTERESTING THING THAT HAPPENED WHILE THE X-MEN WERE SPLIT UP DIDN'T REALLY HAPPEN. THE BEAST AND ICEMAN WERE IN CALIFORNIA, AND THEY FOUGHT METOXO THE LAVA MAN. SINCE METOXO, THE LAVA MAN (NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH MOLTO, THE LAVA MAN OR THE MOLTEN MAN) DIDN'T EXIST, THE BEAST AND ICEMAN COULDN'T REALLY BEAT HIM UP, SO THEY DECIDED TO JOIN UP WITH THE OTHER X-MEN AND
BEAT MAGNETO UP AGAIN.
SINCE THE REAL MAGNETO WAS IN THE SAVAGE LAND (NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE HIDDEN LAND), THE X-MEN HAD TO BEAT UP A ROBOT MAGNETO. THE ROBOT WAS PRETENDING TO BE THE FATHER OF LORNA DANE (OBVIOUSLY A MUTANT, BECAUSE SHE HAD GREEN HAIR).
SO CYCLOPS PRETENDED TO BE ERIK THE RED (WHO DIDN'T EXIST UNTIL LATER, AND WAS A FAKE EVEN THEN), AND THE X-MEN BEAT UP THE ROBOT, MESMERO, AND HORDES OF LATENT MUTANTS (WHICH AREN'T NORMAL MUTANTS, BUT ARE THE NEXT BEST THING).
SHORTLY AFTER THAT, CYCLOPS' BROTHER ALEX (A MUTANT WHO DIDN'T KNOW IT) WAS KIDNAPPED BY THE LIVING PHARAOH (A MUTANT WHO THOUGHT HE WAS SOMETHING ELSE). THE X-MEN CHASED THE LIVING PHARAOH TO EGYPT, WHERE ALEX DISCOVERED THAT HE WAS REALLY HAVOK (THOUGH HE DIDN'T KNOW THE NAME YET), AND THE LIVING PHARAOH DISCOVERED THAT HE WAS REALLY THE LIVING MONOLITH, AND EVERYBODY ASKED "WHAT IS THE POWER?", AND NOBODY KNEW.

Since the X-Men were at fairly Loose Ends, Larry Trask decided it was Time to Wreak Vengeance, and Rebuilt the Sentinels, who promptly captured Havok and Lorna Dane. The Beast and Iceman flew home to find Lorna and the Sentinels captured Iceman. The Angel flew home to help the Beast find Iceman and Lorna (they all thought Havok was still in Egypt), and while Cyclops and Marvel Girl were flying home, the Sentinels captured him, (the Angel). So while the Sentinels were capturing Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch (former Bad Mutants who were now Good, and Avengers besides), and other mutants, Cyclops, Marvel Girl and the Beast snuck up on the Sentinels and Tricked them into flying Into the Sun.





When they finished that, the X-Men had to Beat Up Sauron, an old freind of Professor X's, and chase him to the Savage Land, where they met Magneto, and Beat him Up again. On their way back, Sunfire tried to Beat them Up (Sunfire was Bad then, Good Later, but always a Surly Mutant), and when they got home, Professor Xavier had decided not to be Dead anymore.

What Professor X had decided was to have gone Into Hiding while the Changeling,

(who had stopped being Confused, and wanted to be Good), in Professor X's form, **Died.**

Professor X had gone into Hiding to Formulate a Plan to Defeat the Z'nox (more Aliens), and had come out of Hiding for Two Reasons:

1) The Z'nox were attacking.

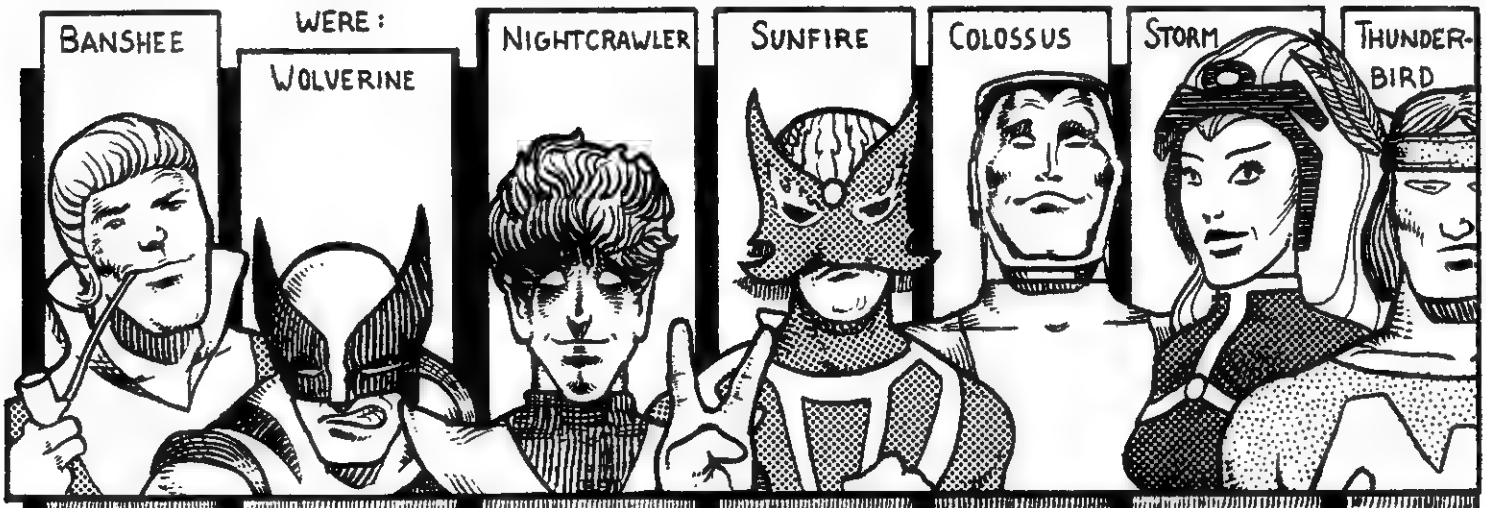
2) The Small Children (with All the Money) wanted him to.

So the X-Men Beat Up the Z'nox, and even the Hulk, but the Small Children were still not happy, and the X-Men were Cancelled.

BEING CANCELLED MEANS THAT YOU NO LONGER HAVE ADVENTURES EVERY MONTH (OR EVEN EVERY TWO MONTHS), SO THE X-MEN BECAME FAR LESS ACTIVE. THE BEAST LEFT TO GO HAIRY BY HIMSELF, BUT IT DIDN'T WORK OUT, AND HE HAD TO BECOME AN AVENGER.

THE OTHER X-MEN HAD SPORADIC ADVENTURES GETTING BEATEN UP BY MAGNETO AND HUNTED BY THE SECRET EMPIRE, UNTIL THEY WERE CAPTURED BY A MUTANT ISLAND (THAT WALKED LIKE A MAN) NAMED KRAKOA, BECAUSE THE SMALL CHILDREN WANTED THEM TO HAVE REGULAR ADVENTURES AGAIN.

IN THE PAST, WHEN PEOPLE HAD GOTTEN CAPTURED, THE X-MEN HAD GONE AND RESCUED THEM. THIS TIME, HOWEVER, SINCE THE X-MEN HAD BEEN CAPTURED, THERE WERE NO X-MEN LEFT TO RESCUE THEM. SO PROFESSOR X (WHO WAS NOT CAPTURED) (→) AND CYCLOPS (←) (WHO HAD BEEN RELEASED BY KRAKOA TO LEAD OTHER MUTANTS INTO ITS SLIMY CLUTCHES) HAD TO GO AND FIND A NEW SET OF X-MEN TO RESCUE THE OLD SET.... (WE'RE NOT MAKING THIS UP, YOU KNOW). THE NEW X-MEN WERE:



(WHO WAS GOOD NOW)

(A SAVAGE CANADIAN WHO HAD BEEN MEAN TO THE HULK)

(WHO HAD POINTED EARS)

(THE SURLY MUTANT)

(WHO WAS RUSSIAN)

(WHO HAD POINTED EYEBROWS)

(WHO WAS IRRITABLE AND UNINTERESTING).

THE NEW X-MEN WERE NOT CALLED GIFTED YOUNGSTERS (WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN CONFUSING, BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT YOUNG). THEY WERE CALLED ALL-NEW AND ALL-DIFFERENT, UNTIL THEY BECAME UNCANNY. THEY FLEW TO KRAKOA AND RESCUED THE OLD X-MEN. THEN ALL THE X-MEN CONSPIRED TO THROW KRAKOA INTO SPACE.

AFTERWARDS, SUNFIRE QUIT IN DISGUST, JUST BECAUSE HE WAS THE DISGUSTING TYPE, AND THE OLD X-MEN (EXCEPT CYCLOPS) TEARFULLY RESIGNED. THIS WAS NOT MUCH BETTER THAN BEING CANCELLED. THE ANGEL AND ICEMAN JOINED THE CHAMPIONS (AND GOT CANCELLED AGAIN), HAVOK AND LORNA DANE WENT TO THE DESERT, AND MARVEL GIRL JUST WENT AWAY AND CAME BACK (SHE WASN'T CONFUSED, SHE WAS *IN LOVE*).

CYCLOPS BECAME DEPRESSED, AND RELEASED KIEROK THE DAMNED, WHO TRIED TO CONQUER EARTH FOR OLD GODS WHOM NOBODY BELIEVED IN ANY MORE. KIERROK WAS CONTAINED, WHILE STEVEN LANG REBUILT THE SENTINELS AND KILLED AN OLD FRIEND.

SNICKT

WHILE MARVEL GIRL WAS AWAY, THE NEW X-MEN HAD ADVENTURES.

SHRAK HAK

FIRST COUNT NEFARIA TOOK A BASE AWAY FROM THE ARMY, SO THE X-MEN HAD TO BEAT HIM UP AND GIVE IT BACK (COUNT NEFARIA WAS THEREFORE BAD, BUT ALSO UNORIGINAL).

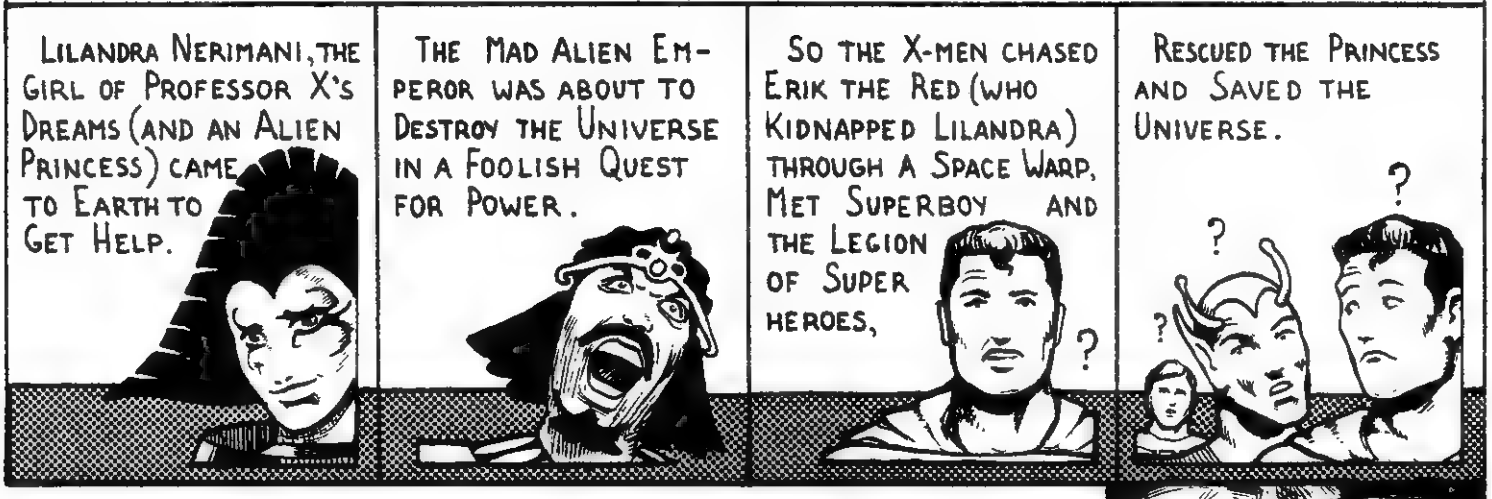
PROFESSOR XAVIER TRIED TO GO ON VACATION (BECAUSE OF HIS DREAMS), BUT THE SECOND ERIK THE RED TRIED TO DEMOLISH PROFESSOR X'S PLANE (WITH HIM IN IT). THE X-MEN THWARTED ERIK, AND VERY NEARLY BEAT HIM UP, BUT HE ESCAPED. THIS NEW ERIK THE RED WAS ONLY PRETENDING TO BE ERIK THE RED, AND WAS REALLY ANOTHER BAD ALIEN. THAT COMES LATER.

BAM BAM

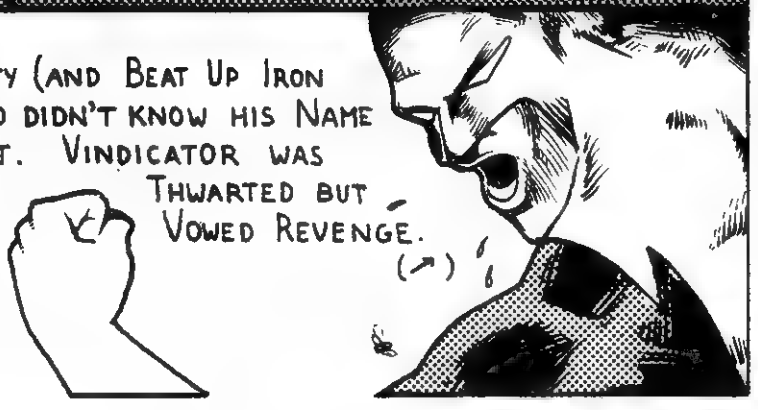
THUNDERBIRD DIED IN A FATAL EXPLOSION (WHICH IS VERY RARE), BECOMING THE FIRST DEAD X-MAN. THE MIMIC, WHO DIED IN CANADA, DOES NOT COUNT. HE WAS RETIRED AT THE TIME.

THE SENTINELS KIDNAPPED SOME OF THE X-MEN (INCLUDING MARVEL GIRL, WHO WAS BACK), AND LOCKED THEM UP IN OUTER SPACE.
(IN SPACE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM)

THE OTHER X-MEN RESCUED THEM, BUT ON THE WAY BACK, MARVEL GIRL DIED AS A RESULT OF SEVERE SOLAR ACTIVITY, WHICH ALSO TURNED HER INTO PHOENIX. WHILE SHE RECUPERATED FROM HER DEATH, THE OTHER X-MEN (EXCEPT CYCLOPS) WENT TO IRELAND TO BEAT UP BLACK TOM AND WATCH THE JUGGERNAUT HURL HIMSELF INTO THE SEA. WHEN THE X-MEN WENT TO SCOTLAND, MAGNETO BEAT THEM UP AND CYCLOPS TOOK THEM BACK TO NEW YORK WHERE PHOENIX WAS BEATING UP FIRELORD.


LILANDRA NERIMANI, THE GIRL OF PROFESSOR X'S DREAMS (AND AN ALIEN PRINCESS) CAME TO EARTH TO GET HELP.
THE MAD ALIEN EMPEROR WAS ABOUT TO DESTROY THE UNIVERSE IN A FOOLISH QUEST FOR POWER.
SO THE X-MEN CHASED ERIK THE RED (WHO KIDNAPPED LILANDRA) THROUGH A SPACE WARP, MET SUPERBOY AND THE LEGION OF SUPER HEROES,
?
RESCUED THE PRINCESS AND SAVED THE UNIVERSE.
?
?
?

WHEN THEY GOT HOME, THEY WENT TO A PARTY (AND BEAT UP IRON FIST) AND A PICNIC WHERE VINDICATOR (WHO DIDN'T KNOW HIS NAME YET) TRIED TO FORCE WOLVERINE TO RE-INLIST. VINDICATOR WAS THWARTED BUT VOWED REVENGE.



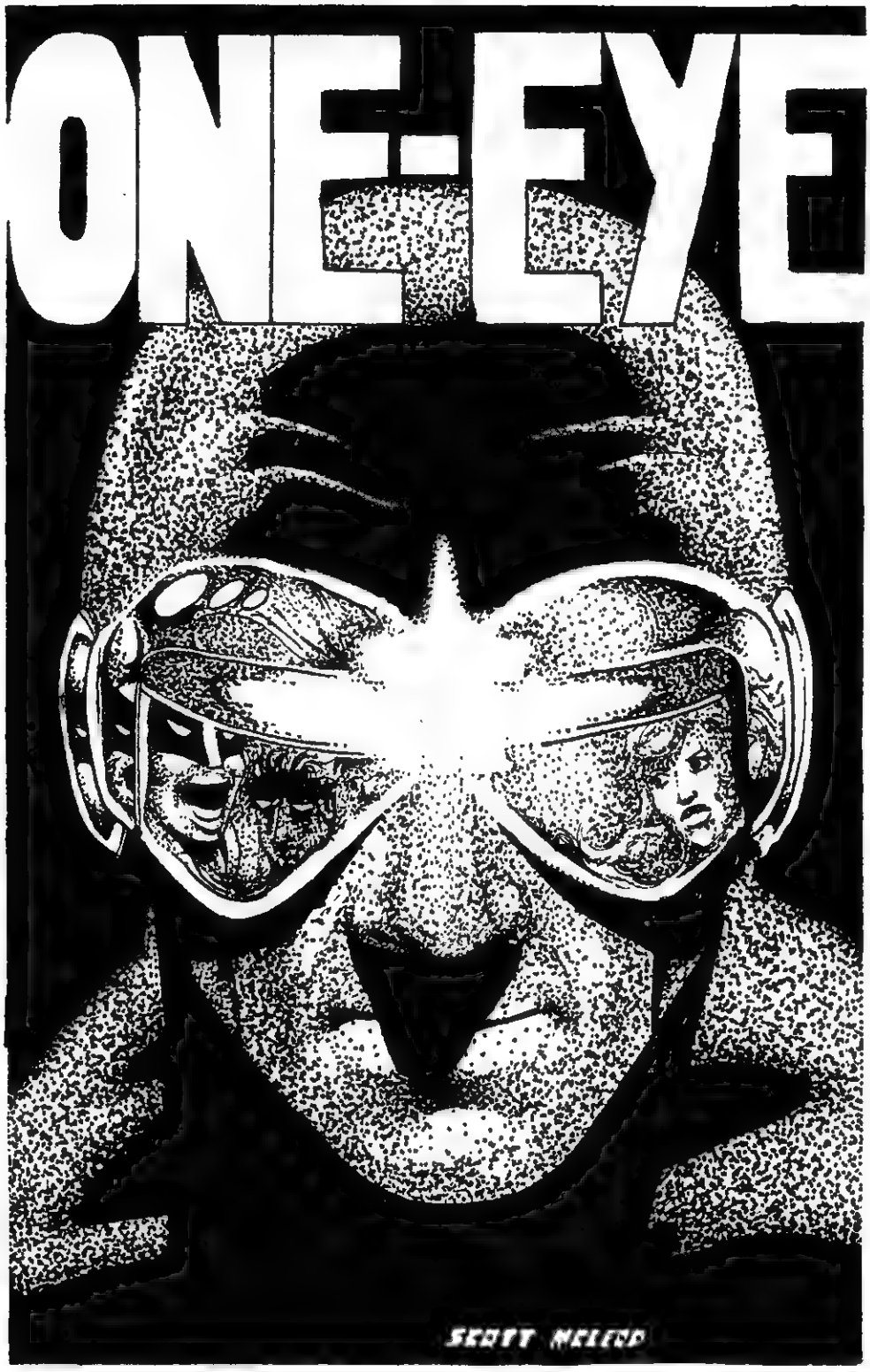
The X-men Beat Up Warhawk (who was both Bad and Confused) and were Captured by Mesmero (who was just Bad). Mesmero made them Think they were a Circus, until Magneto Beat Up Mesmero, flew the X-men to the South Pole in a Circus Wagon, Dropped them Into a Volcano, and Beat them Up. They escaped and Beat him Up. Then the Volcano caved In, and the Beast (who was Helping Out) and Phoenix, who escaped through the top (into Antarctica) thought the rest, who escaped out the side (into the Savage Land) were Dead. And Vice Versa...

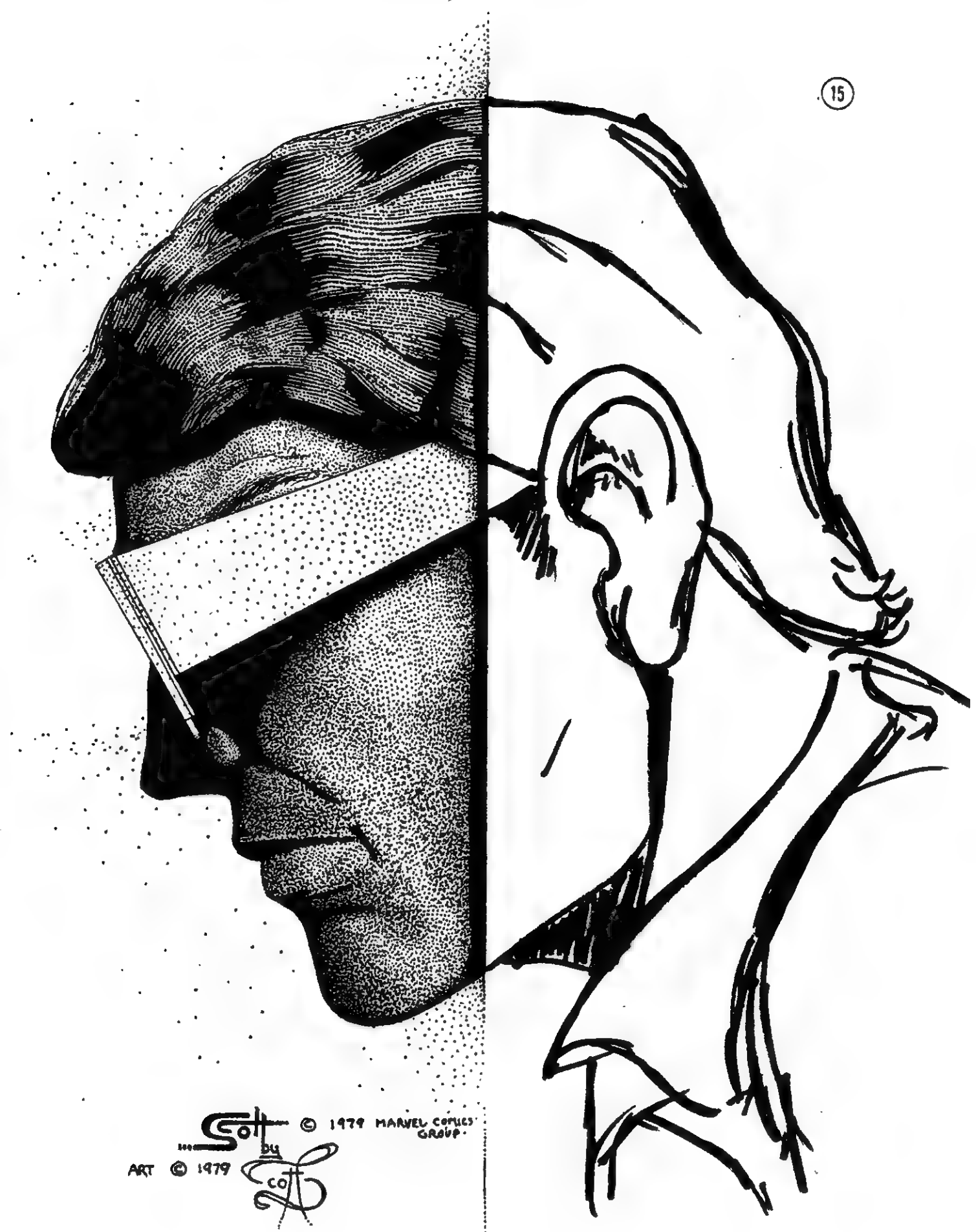
This is thought by Many to be the X-men's Most Confusing Act.

The X-men in the Savage Land Beat Up Sauron Again, and then helped Kazar Beat Up Garokk, a Petrified Man. While This was happening, Phoenix and the Beast went Home to tell Professor X that the X-men were Dead. In their Grief, the Beast went Back to the Avengers, Phoenix went on Vacation, and Professor X left for Outer Space.

The X-men left the Savage Land and went to Canada (Beating Up Moses Magnum in Japan on the way), and Alpha Flight (who were Vindicator and some friends) again tried to make Wolverine Re-Enlist. When they Finally Got Home, Arcade Kidnapped the X-men to Play Games (Arcade is a Nut). The X-men Won, found out the Beast Was Alive, and Headed for Scotland, where Mutant X was making Mummies (and he already Had one).

The Strangest Heroes of All will Continue Being Strange every Month (Small Children Willing), but Future Events (at this Point) haven't happened yet, which makes them Science Fiction, which has no place in History, like this one.


ONE-EYE
SCOTT McCLOUD



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INTELLIGENT LIFE ON EARTH

by Robert Strauss

Entirely too much has been written about Will Eisner, so I'm going to discuss Wally Wood for a while.

Wood's always been one of comics' premiere sf artists, and he was never more in command of his talents than in the early fifties when he worked for EC, Avon, and briefly for Eisner on The Spirit. He was an inspired choice to illustrate Denny Colt's Outer Space adventures. His innate gifts for depicting alien landscapes and scientific hardware, as well as his ability to draw expressive faces, enabled Wood to breathe life into what were then, and are even more so now, some pretty farfetched stories.

This is most evident in the reprint in Kitchen Sink's Spirit #21. The paranoia on the dictator Rivera's face, who seems incapable of looking straight ahead on page 4 and by page 7 descends into total, graphic schizophrenia, provides an emotional resonance that gives the ridiculous plot a semblance of believability. Again, the half-witted idea of someone choosing to stay alone on the Moon with inadequate supplies (#26's "Man in the Moon") is given tragic poignance by Wood's depiction of vastness, isolation, and Dutch's emotional reactions to it all.

The lyrical effect of the Wood Spirits comes as no surprise, since he's always been as much of a poet of sf art as Jules Feiffer, who wrote the narration and dialogue for the series, has been a master of irony and characterization. Will Eisner's forte, on the other hand, has always been visual expressionism and its attendant close relationship with charicature (Ebony, Dolan, etc.). His vision is of a realistic milieu from a distorted viewpoint, one which the genre of science fiction is more or less diametrically opposed to. Eisner's "Life on Another Planet", which has been serialized concurrently with reprints of Wood's "Outer Space" series over the past year in Kitchen Sink's Spirit, is proof that character, not charicature, is an integral element to believable sf. It's also proof that

OH, NO... OH MY GOD MY GOD!
WE HAVE TWO PASSENGERS FOR YOU DR. HOAD!
ER... DR. HOAD IS NOT FEELING VERY WELL... AH... JUST BRING THEM DOWN TO THE LABORATORY! ... HE'LL BE READY FOR 'EM BY... AH, .. MORNING!

an ambitious project is a poor substitute for an imaginative one.

There are many things wrong with "Life on Another Planet" that the fact that it's more of a sociological drama with a few sf elements only exacerbates. For one thing, it's too damned cluttered. Even in 128 pages, to try to include every geopolitical and societal subplot the modern world has to offer in one story is a doomed effort. Focusing on three or four of the main characters, their subjective experience of the whole mess, would've allowed room for depth and a little development that would've at least made somebody seem human. As it's done, the reader's attention is scattered across such a wide range of changing locales without the slightest insulation of a dramatic structure that he needs a bottle of Dramamine just to maintain his equilibrium.

A more specific focusing of attention would also have helped in placing emphasis on some of the genuinely worthwhile themes Eisner attempts to present. The basic idea that evidence of extra-terrestrial life would more likely accelerate the disintegration of international and domestic order than put into motion the cherished sf concept of uniting mankind in the face of a common foe or savior is an astute one. Questions of industrial interference in world politics, unbridled exploitation of questionable scientific discoveries and the use of religion, patriotism and philosophy to delude a population are trivialized by being given the same amount of storytime, and hence the same emotional emphasis, as a dozen other subplots like, say, a few hopelessly maudlin love affairs. One or the other should be the center of attention. But who can keep track of an eighteen ring circus?

Naturally, a huge cast of characters who never transcend stereotype do little to make plowing through this overly complicated plot rewarding. I couldn't even begin to list the prefabricated array of mad scientists, ruthless businessmen, corrupt politicians, two-faced zealots, frustrated matrons, schizophrenic spies and assorted hit men, hatchet men and moles Eisner parades through the story with an alarming lack of self-control. What's even more disheartening is that he rarely draws them expressing any emotions more complex that selfishness, fear or anger.

These already severe difficulties are compounded by the structure and presentation of the story. A preponderance of static shots, too many of them talking heads, serve as the vehicles for narrative drive. Whenever an act of violence, usually the only non-verbal expression of character in the whole story, occurs, such as the braining of Cobbs in #19 or the machinegunning of the Star People in #25, the effect is never shocking or revealing, but as predictable and mechanical as a

well-tuned Volkswagen. A visual story should *never* depend on dialogue to tell itself, which Eisner proved time and again with The Spirit. But "Life on Another Planet" is virtually held captive by the words its characters say, the verisimilitude of which is of shockingly poor quality.

Then there are the bizarre moral conclusions. A good example is the Spirit surrogate Bludd's statement in #23 that this is man's great chance to "... stave off war and give civilized people the first great common cause since the Crusades!" Was this just poor, throwaway writing, or did Eisner really mean to characterize the Arabs, who'd invented modern mathmatics and figured out how to preserve meat with spices at a time when most Europeans were living in mud huts, as uncivilized? Perhaps Bludd was speaking from the Saracen point of view.

Only the most gratuitous attempts at foreshadowing are made. We learn that the assassin Rico is a homosexual, which is integral to a vital plot point, only on the page before that plot point occurs in #26, although ample opportunity was presented to bring this out earlier, and thus make the whole sequence seem less contrived (admittedly, the first page in #24 does have him rubbing his crotch in one panel, but since he's been characterized as a slob throughout the story, this appears to be just one more in a series of uncouth acts. Had he made a pass at Bludd in the construction shack, which he didn't, the story not only would've been enriched, but at least in one aspect made plausible). The story abounds in convenient coincidences such as this that could, with a little creative thought, have just as easily been developed throughout the length of the narrative instead of shoved in at the last minute right before they became necessary to move the plot along. Visual storytelling, more than any other medium, is uniquely suited for dramatic buildup. Indeed, it's negligent when it fails to do so.

I've been going on about the story elements of "Life on Another Planet", generally at the expense of discussing the visual technique. I realize the latter is what Eisner's justly deserved reputation rests on, and the graphic aspects of the new strip do fare somewhat better than the verbal. Somewhat, but not much.

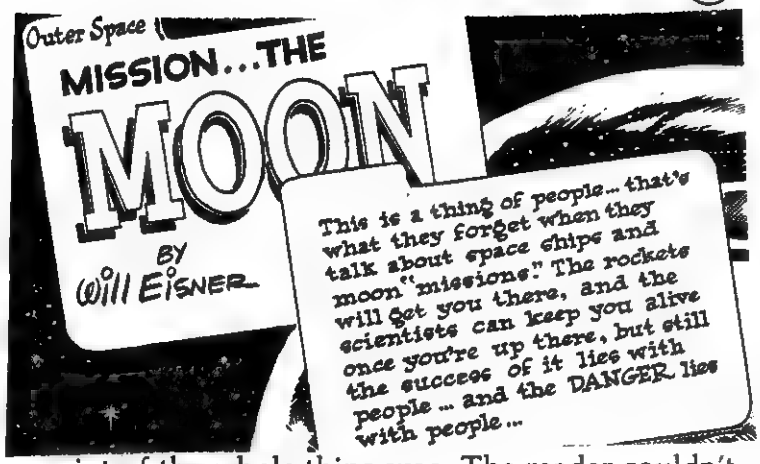
Rain, smoke and inventive titles were not what made The Spirit so visually exciting. They were the icing on a cake that was composed of an organic feel for subjective angles, chiascuro lighting and inter- and intra-frame composition, and a knowledge of how to integrate those elements into an effective storytelling technique. Just like a film cannot be shot outside the boundaries of a frame, hence demanding that style be created within and between the frame, comics are more or less bound by the static equivalent of the film frame, the panel. Certainly, the panel is less restrictive and more adaptable, but only the occasional Neal Adams has ever been successful at violating its conventions and still telling his story Eisner, the most cinematic of all comic artists, never attempted to work outside a traditional panel structure with The Spirit, and the result was clear, telling images with a lifelike sense of movement to them. In "Life on Another Planet", he throws conventional panel arrangement pretty much to the wind, which succeeds in making his muddled narrative all the more unattractive, with stylistic indulgences that do nothing to enhance the storyline.

THERE, NOW, MARCO... LIE DOWN... I'LL GET YOU SOME COFFEE.
OOOHH MY HEAD... WHO IS THAT TALKIN'..?? WHAT'S HE SAYIN?
OH DEAR WHAT A MESS... AND ALL THESE PAPERS... YOU'RE A WRITER??
?
THIS IS IT!! THIS IS THE WAY OUT... I WILL LEAVE THIS PUTRID PLANET
?
I, MARCO, WILL LEAD YOU TO THE PROMISED LAND! YES... THIS IS THE CALL... WE MUST GET READY!

I suppose the process of Marco's revelation in #20 was supposd to depict the evolution of a desperate individual from hopelessness into fanatacism. Unfortunately, Eisner gives the impression that such a transformation can occur within the length of one breath (page 20, two middle scenes), with a tv set the medium for enlightenment, no less. Regardless of what any deprogrammer may try to tell you, such personality shifts do not happen in the wink of an eye. The old Eisner would have drawn this sequence out over at least half a dozen panels, because the depth of the change being protrayed requires that much attention.

Another example of technique wasted in the name of expediency is on page 38 in #21. Bludd's escape from Moscow (on foot, yet) is told in four panels connected by a series of surreal, suspicious eyes. A more detailed account of the adventure was sacrificed here on the altar of the elephantine plot, making the basically inventive visual technique appear no more than a cheap shortcut (incidentally, how do Bludd and Nadia make it back and forth across the iron curtain as many times as they do during the story? Eisner gives nary a hint as to how they pull it off, or for that matter how Nadia manages to single-handedly blow up a presumably well-guarded Russian launch site. Makes you wonder why everybody's not doing it if it's so easy.).

Ultimately, all the elements of storytelling: Structure, movement, dialogue, technique; that Eisner was once the undisputed master of, are fumbled in "Life on Another Planet" for the sake of, God, what? Some superficial moral lesson? An asinine affirmation of the rugged individual's power to control his own destiny? After struggling through this 128-page orgy of complicated oversimplification, it really doesn't matter what the


Outer Space
MISSION...THE
MOON
BY
Will Eisner
This is a thing of people... that's what they forget when they talk about space ships and moon "missions." The rockets will get you there, and the scientists can keep you alive once you're up there, but still the success of it lies with people... and the DANGER lies with people...

point of the whole thing was. The reader couldn't possibly give a damn.

Yes, entirely too much has been written about Will Eisner, and it appears to have seriously influenced him. Because the one overriding flaw in "Life on Another Planet" is that it is, in every sense of the word, overwritten. Either that, or he took the name of his publisher too seriously, and decided to throw everything but the kitchen sink into his story.

Consider this: Everything in "Life on Another Planet" could conceivably happen (even the whole Idi Amin trip, thin as it is, does have a basis in the obssession of Edward Gairey, one-time dictator of Grenada, that his mission of earth was to greet the first extraterrestrial visitors), yet, in the context of the story, none of it's believable. Nothing in Wood's "Outer Space" is either scientifically or sociologically plausible, yet one can suspend disbelief sufficiently enough to enjoy each episode, mainly becaue the stories and characters ring emotionally true. Maybe it has something to do with the opening line from "Mission: The Moon" in #22: "This is a thing of people..."

Will Eisner was one of the last people I'd've expected to forget that.

CRITIQUE

10. Superb
9. Excellent
8. Very Good
7. Good
6. Fairly Good
5. Fair
4. Tolerable
3. Poor
2. Very Poor
1. Worthless

CRITIQUE is basically a review column, but we won't specifically recommend that you buy or not buy a particular item. We will review each item to the best of our ability and let each reader take it from there. We will be reviewing almost any item (fanzines, prozines, records, portfolios, tapes, posters, or just anything of general interest) with one exception. We will not be reviewing any of my own publications, for obvious reasons. *CRITIQUE* offers an audience of over 3,000 people. We also offer the publisher of any item we review up to one hundred words of free space to rebut his review, if he chooses to do so, providing his review is less than an "8" rating. All rebuttals to appear in the next column must be in our hands at least five days before the ad deadline of the next RBCC or they will be run in the following issue. If you have an item you would like reviewed, send a copy of it to: JAMES VAN HISE, 10885 ANGOLA ROAD, SAN DIEGO, CA. 92126.

A few things to remember: Where Undergrounds are concerned, you must be 18 or older to order them. All fanzines reviewed are 8 1/2 X 11 with offset printing and wraparound binding unless otherwise noted. From time to time there may be a publication over which two of our reviewers have wide disagreement, and in which case two reviews of the same book will be run in the interest of fairness.

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JAMES VAN HISE / EDITOR

ALIEN ENCOUNTERS
$1.25-32 pages (7¼x11)-Published by FantaCo Enterprises Inc., 21 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210.

Have I got this right? If underground comix are supposed to provide the freest avenue of personal expression, and overground comics are exemplified by strict formulaic approaches and rigid thematic restrictions, then the so-called ground level comics represent a kind of creative kiddieland: Not daring enough to be really challenging, they thumb their noses at genre conventions without ever transcending the genre itself.

ALIEN ENCOUNTERS is a second-generation ground level that lacks both the boldness of the most audacious of its antecedants, *ANDROMEDA*, and the quietly professional formalism of the slickest, the *STAR-REACH* books.

Which isn't to say *ALIEN ENCOUNTERS* doesn't have its small triumphs. The oozy, EC-type cover by George Chastain is fine, as is practically all the art inside. Enough variations on the limited theme, flying saucers, are managed as can be reasonably expected. Stories are short, one six pages and the rest four or less, mostly of the surprise ending variety.

These endings are responsible for the book's overriding weakness. All but three turn out to be gags based on some rudimentary reversal of culturally associated expectations. The serious strips depend on the dramatic equivalent, role reversal, to deliver their limp ironic punches.

The final result is a lot of nice-looking pointlessness that's too short to be intriquing, too quick to be tedious, too simple to be funny and too elementary to be moving. With the usual culprits (Hembeck, Bissette, Yeates, Cruze, Boxell, Larson, Stiles, Zeck, et al) still thrashing about somewhere between artistic integrity and professional compromise.

RATING: 6—Robert Strauss

STAR FEMS
$3.00-28 pages-Published by Paragon Publications, Box 1216, Longwood, Fl. 32750.

Hey, I realize it's all in fun, boys being boys and what have you, and I know "good girl art" is a legitimate branch of comic art, the historical roots of which have absolutely nothing to do with sexism or exploitation, and I'm certain that none of the guys responsible for *Star Fems* actually relate to the women in their lives as anything less than the complex, totally human, emotionally mature, equal beings that they are. It's all just harmless fantasizing, right?

Well, even if any of the above statements were valid, it still wouldn't help *Star Fems* because,

irregardless of the regressive adolescent consciousness that permeates the book, the stories simply don't make it. Except for the first story, which is drawn in an abysmally flat (place pun here) style by publisher Bill Black, Steve Vance and inker John Beatty, the artwork throughout the book by people like Mike Vosburg, Dennis Fujitake and Paul McCusker, never transcends a level of static adequacy which, coupled with the incompetent writing on the stories, turns what at the very least should be a few titilating romps into dull, teeth-gnashing tedium. The jokes are old, the satire's misplaced, and what passes for excitement and adventure made me want to run out and watch five hours of old *Sky King* episodes to put a little stimulation in my life.

These boys are obviously under the influence of Trina Robbins' old Speed Queen and Pantha strips, but they missed the one vital point that make Trina's lady adventurers so much fun to read about: Big tits are a poor substitute for a woman of character, and nowhere near as sexy, either.

Perhaps Trina's being female has something to do with the fact that her ladies are so much more interesting than the ones in *Star Fems*. Until Black and his crew all get sex-change operations, I'd suggest they stop trying to send boys out to do a woman's job.

RATING: 3—Robert Strauss

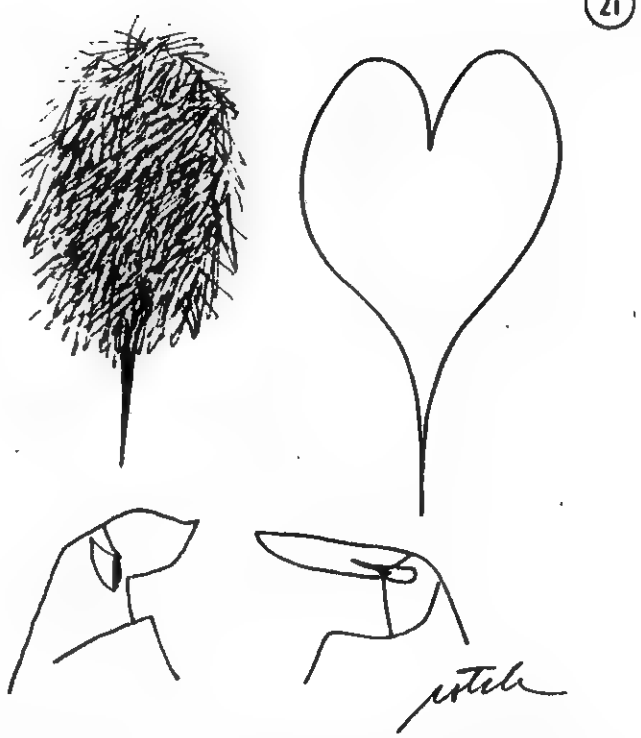
FANDOM CALENDER 1981
$2.95-32 pages-Published by Smile in the Dark Productions, 944 Austin Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30307.

Everybody wants to know when the first dog was launched into space, or when the New York subway opened. But does anybody out there know what Albert Einstein and Hank Ketchum have in common?

All this and gobs more worthless historical information can be found in the *1981 FANDOM CALENDAR*, along with some of the best fan art to come down the stretch in quite a while. Fujitake's color cover, Willie Blyberg's January, March by Gary Kwapisz and Mahlon Fawcett's November are particularly impressive in a field of standouts.

Editor Ward Batty keeps the months zipping by with exhaustive, albeit irreverent, devotion to detail. Aside from the relatively mundane events listed above, Batty's research staff keeps the comics fan informed of such important anniversaries as those of the DC Implosion, the first issue of *SPYMAN*, and the founding of more APAs than you'd believe existed.

All this, along with the more predictable calendar information (U.S. Grant's birthday, *GREEN LANTERN #1*), is complemented with excerpts from classic newspaper strips and underground comix, making *FANDOM CALENDAR* a rollicking treat that's educational, too (tell your teacher, kids!).



Batty and the boys have found, or made up, an event for just about every day of the year, and I personally found it enjoyable to compare what happened on my birthday (*STAR TREK* animated series began) to what happened on my girlfriend's birthday (Wild Bill Hickok killed while playing poker). Not only was it fun, it added new depth to our relationship.

RATING: 8—Robert Strauss

HEROES OF THE BLUES
A boxed set of 36 trading cards-$5.98-Available from Yazoo Records Inc., 245 Waverly Place, New York NY 10014

Am I the only one who's ever wondered why, in this sludge-clogged culture of ours, no one's had the poor taste and common sense to market rock n' roll trading cards? At this point, it would be far from the greatest indignity done to the music, although I still shiver at the thought of reformed Weathermen trading high school kids three Bob Dylans for a Cheap Trick and a Van Halen.

Luckily, R. Crumb and the folks at Yazoo Records have beaten the fast-buck operators to the punch with the spiffiest little novelty to come down the pike in some time. These 36 full-color portraits of the great bluesmen of the twenties and thirties each have a paragraph or biographical and professional data on the back, and look to be

WE USE
MONEY
HELP PE
GOTH
NATIO

taken after actual photographs. The trading card fourcolor is terrific, and Crumb's talent for depicting expressive faces has never found more apt subject matter. The depth of emotion and wide range of style these people brought to their music jumps out of each one of these miniature portraits. The determination, the joy and the pain that the blues was all about can be seen here in the eyes of Rube Lacey, Son House, Mississippi John Hurt and all the others.

The box these cards come in is no letdown, either, with great lettering and a snazzy black, white and red design. Those of you with an interest in the music will get more out of these cards than others, and the data on the back is at best sketchy. Obviously not for all tastes, but oh so fine, for those in the know.

RATING: 9—Robert Strauss

ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET THE BRIDE OF HEMBECK

$1.25-28 pages-Published by Fantaco Enterprises, 21 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210

Boy, what a sweet racket this is! Not only are Fred Hembeck's gag strips printed in *THE BUYER'S GUIDE*, DC comics and all over fandom, but he gets to publish them in albums that sell like sheets at a OPEC meeting. Pretty good for a guy who mostly draws stick figure caricatures of other people's copyrights.

Why does it work? Hembeck's no whiz at dialogue, his satire's cheap and obvious, and his artistic style is firmly rooted in the same school of diminishing a[illegible]vement that Charles Schulz and Garry Trudeau work (two guys who, incidentally, know a bit about marketing snide humor strips themselves).

So why did *BRIDE OF HEMBECK* make me laugh out loud so many times? Probably because, as Schulz does with psychology and Trudeau with politics, Hembeck satirizes a subject that is so patently rife with ridiculous potential from the word go that one needs merely to call attention to it in order to get a laugh.

That Fred Hembeck is the only person doing anything interesting with superheroes these days, and that only by making fun of them, must say something about the genre. Something not altogether encouraging, I'd suspect.

RATING:7—Robert Strauss

QUESTAR #10

$2.25-76 pages-Published bi-monthly by MW Communications, 247 Fort Pitt Blvd., Pittsburg, Pa.15222.

I buy a lot of magazines and fanzines and I don't always have the time to read them as carefully as I'd like to. I wouldn't have read this latest issue of *Questar* cover to cover if I hadn't planned to review it because I would have felt I dodn't have the time, but as things would have it I've been meaning to review this magazine for three years and just hadn't gotten around to it, so a look at this publication is long overdue.

This is not just another *Starlog*, although a quick glance at it could easily cause one to mistake it as one. Now don't get me wrong. I like *Starlog*, but it has spawned a lot of imitations, which are just that. In this case, *Questar* is an interesting hybrid, in that it covers films and film-makers in the fantasy field, interviews science fiction personalities and prints new short fiction, and also gives more than a passing nod to comics, and does it in a manner that it fitting to all of them. This is not to say that it was always so, as early issues experimented with ideas and formats, sometimes very unsuccessfully, but they did learn from their errors. Whereas the first half dozen issues had only a few things of interest, the last four issues have been of genuine high calibre. Although launched with issue one as a fanzine published by Bill Wilson (whose *The Collector* was very popular in the early seventies(it quickly reshaped itself into a magazine that was more commercial and viable for major newsstand outlets. It sports a lot of color now and is using it well, and although I approached this issue with a gimlet eye, I could not find anything that I was disappointed in, and it surprised the hell out of me! The more I read this issue the more pleased I was that I had chosen it to

review because I found myself impressed with the writing and carrying away a lot of interesting information that I otherwise would not have possessed. Let me give you an idea of the scope of this issue and bear in mind that it carries off this juggling act not only convincingly, but very well.

Following a letters column, an information section (on SF & science), and a fine book review column, we reach the first major feature. This is a debate, pro and con, on the development of nuclear power plants! The points of view presented are from no less that Dr. Edward Teller and Dr. George Wald, as well as a few other expert opinions from both sides added at the conclusion. It is fascinating from many standpoints in that the side against development discusses many specific things whereas the side in favor deals in generalities and bite-the-bullet remarks, and these from heavyweight proponents. *I* learned a lot from this.

Next is the first of three pieces of short fiction by unknown authors. What is surprising is that none of it is bad and some, like "Zinsky's Vacation" by Daniel Gilbert, is very good indeed. The writing is indeed of professional calibre.

And article on Carl Sagen's PBS series *Cosmos* is not only not just another rehash of what you've already read in *Future Life* and other magazines, but is quite different and interesting, especially the accompanying piece by artist Rick Sternbach who also discusses his work on *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*.

Artists are in no way overlooked by this magazine as they present a five page color feature on Ken Barr which is gorgeous to behold.

The article "Television Vs. Science Fiction: Could It Be War" presents a convincing argument for the proposition that the commercial networks have consistently done everything they could to scuttle SF series, largely in the areas of programming timeslots and demands to rush production. Even if, like me, you couldn't stand *Battlestar: Galactica*, it cannot be denied that ABC shuffled that show all over its schedule and then revived it as an even more juvenile version which was supposed to stand up to *60 Minutes*, an often number one rated show. This article provides a lot of disturbing food for thought.

The article/interview with make-up wizard John Chambers presents an informative look at this highly skilled craftsman, as well as an unrelenting look at film-making as seen from an insider of twenty-five years standing. Again there is a lot of fascinating information here which I had never encountered before as well as high quality color stills and a fine introductory painting by Phil Wilson. Excellent stuff!

"Just Imagine Jeanie!" started out as a dreadful comic strip by Forrest J. Ackerman. It has since passed into other hands and writer John Nubbin has performed the impossible by infusing life into a comic strip corpse that I would have sworn did not have an interesting twitch left to be found even if you sent a million volts through it. Although the artwork by Mike Grell isn't great (largely, it seems, due to it being squeezed into a lot of small panels), the story more than makes up for it. By throwing in touches reminescent of both Captain America and *THE STARS MY DESTINATION*, the story has suddenly become worth the trouble to read it. I'm actually interested to see where they take it

The remainder of the issue has some brief film reviews as well as a fine preview of Bill Malone's first film, the *Alien*-inspired *Scared To Death*, which looks like it could be quite an interesting cinematic experience. The moody color stills presented with this piece certainly bode well.

I am truely surprised at not just how good this issue is, but at how consistently professional it has become. It's nice to see that some people are capable of learning from their mistakes while others can only repeat them. This magazine is a more-than-just-worthwhile effort.

RATING:10 (James Van Hise)

CINEFAN #2

$2.00-68 pages-Published by Randall Larson, 774 Vista Grande Ave., Los Altos, Ca. 94022

Remember way back when *Cinefantastique* used to cover films from a fannish point of view? That is they'd review films from the standpoint of attempting to deliver knowledge and an interesting perspective as if they were talking *to* you instead of *down* to you? Well, that's what *CineFan* does. This issue has reviews and restrospectives on films both little known and of dubious merits, but the critiques of them are informative *and* interesting.

There are fine articles on ama-films like *The Milpitas Monster*, *John Boy Meets The Texas Chainsaw Killer*, and *The Whisperer In Darkness* as well as a retrospective on the three Amicus Burroughs' films. All of these articles are of equal interest and merit, however, you might judge the subject matter. In fact, I found the ama-film pieces especially fascinating since they are behind the scenes articles as well and bring an interesting insight to the pieces.

Other articles include reviews of Hammer's *Vampire Circus*, a Phillipine film *Superbeast*, as well as several pages of reviews of horror films released over the past several years from several countries other than our own. The articles are interesting because even if the films covered are bad (and not all are), the plots detailed are sometimes

quite interesting even if the films themselves did nothing with them. It's also interesting to know what films are lurking out there because upon reading one review I recognized the film as a wretched piece of garbage shown locally a few weeks ago on a program called "Disasterpiece Theatre" which specializes in showing terrible films and I had turned it on midway through and had marvelled at how truly awful this nameless thing was. Upon reading this article I recognized the film in question, which has the incredible never-to-be-equalled title *Shriek Of The Mutilated.*

There are also more conventional articles such as one on the film music of Bernard Herrman, another on the special effects of *Sinbad And The Eye Of The Tiger*, and even a review of the stage play "The Passion of Dracula."

For the index fans among us, there is a listing of actors and actresses who frequently appeared in horror and fantasy films of the fifties. This checklist presents the actors in alphabetical order and lists all their fantastic film appearances in the fifties, and it's a pretty thorough job. It's one of those amazing pieces of trivia that film archivists will want to have for future reference since it is the only index like it to my knowledge.

Beyond all this there are still more articles, such as a review of Karloff's finest film of the fifties and even an in-depth look at *Robot Monster*, which Dean Chambers refers to as having an "hallucinogenically conceived screenplay."

Lest they be overlooked, they even have reviews of films of the major sort from the last couple of years, and if I close one eye I may even be able to forgive them for giving *Alien* the same kind of dumb myopic review that *Cinefantastique* did. But that way lies madness and a whole 'nother article.

Since this is the first issue of *Cinefan* is six years, I don't expect to see another real soon, but this one at least has a lot to recommend it.

RATING: 9 (James Van Hise)

COVER-UP LOWDOWN
75--48 pages (5 x 7)-Published by Ripoff Press, Box 14158, San Francisco, CA 94114.

You see, it all started with the Tri-Lateral Comission. Howard Hughes' will was just a camouflage, the real question is what were Daniel Ellsberg and Mario Puzo doing at the same Baltimore restaurant on the night of August fifteenth? Is it mere coincidence that the Shah was ousted about the same time Van Hise moved to California? Do you really believe nobody in the Department of Transportation knows the truth? Or is it just that they're not saying?

And what about these guys, Kinney and Mavrides? What do they know? They're cartoonists. Wait a minute... they live in San Francisco. That's near Sacramento. My God! That's where Ronald Reagan...!

Someone's at the door. Jeez, has this really been going on since 1977? Me? Don't worry about me. I'll write from Angola. Gotta go now.

RATING: 8—Robert Strauss

FANFARE #3
$2.50-64 pages-Published by Bill Spicer, 329 North Avenue 66, Los Angeles, CA 90042

FANFARE used to be GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE, but is now "The Magazine of Popular Culture and the Arts", much to the chagrin of most comics fans, including this one. GSM was probably the most intelligent, eclectic and innovative comic magazine of its time, while FANFARE is just slightly better than the average offerings provided for media junkies.

One thing held over from the GSM days is an editorial bent toward the unusual, but while comics is an art form that naturally thrives on the outre and the bizarre (the evident lack of which being the main reason why current newsstand comics are so uniformly lousy), such things are anathema to popular culture. For anything to be a popular success, it has to appeal to as broadly based an audience as possible. Artistically, APOCALYPSE NOW had it all over KRAMER VS. KRAMER, but most casual filmgoers I talked to preferred the latter because "at least it had a plot you could understand". And we all know who won the Acedemy Award that year.

I'm not saying FANFARE's editorial stance is incorrect. I just find it unwieldy, and the result is a magazine whose direction, after three issues in as many years, still seems unclear and incoherent.

There's inevitably going to be a few things in this issue that you won't be interested in. Take your pick: Japanese TV animation; Cutbacks in the record industry; The K-Tel story; Funny futurist art from the past (?); How beauty contests work; Author/filmake/mystic Kenneth Anger; And sculptor/painter Stanislaus Szukalski.

Comics fans get eleven pages of Bill Elder's advertising art, mostly from films and television shows, and an article by Rodney Schroetter on the philosophy behind Steve Gerber's MAN-THING. Schroetter tries to prove the somewhat reactionary point that regular superheroes make much better comics than stuff like MAN-THING because, rather than questioning and trying to get at the truth, they at least remain faithful to their one-note philosophies. Needless to say, he didn't

convince me of anything, and the depth and integrity of Gerber's writing in the accompaning panels that illustrate the article provides an eloquent, though hardly necessary, rebuttal. I never would have expected to see an article as wrongheaded as this in the old GSM.

Back cover is a truly sublime Bill Elder painting. A Norman Rockwell parody, it's entitled "A Visit to Grandma's". The front cover, of a Japanese cartoon character, is nice, but can't compare. Printing quality is excellent throughout, while the writing is generally adequate (except for the incredible letters department. Landon Chesney's and Grass Green's are particularly well done).

Naturally, one's appreciation of FANFARE will vary, depending on one's individual interests outside of the comics field. FANFARE has it's visual presentation down pat, but its content remains shallow and/or not very exciting. Again, something you never had to worry about with GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE.

RATING: 6—ROBERT STRAUSS

ANDROMEDA #6
$1.25 + 50¢postage-52 pages-Published by Silver Snail Comics Ltd., 32 Queen Street West Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 2A9

This publication has published quite a diversity of material since its inception, and although I haven't liked everything they've done, I do applaud what they are doing because they are exposing fandom to more of the different types of S.F. which are around than I think many people are aware of. They are certainly doing more for the concept of marrying S.F. and comics than atavistic efforts like *TIME WARP* have done.

This time out they present a special Alan Dean Foster issue which is noteworthy especially for the fact that two of the three stories are not readily available anywhere else. Only "Why Johnny Can't Speed" is drawn from Foster's excellent collection, *WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE*.

"Metrognome" is a slyly humorous little tale which spans 17 pages and has simply marvelous illos by Tom Nesbitt which are perfectly suited to this odd little story. It's not typical Foster fare in any sense, but it's a lot of fun. My favorite of the issue is "Thrust" illustrated by Don Marshall which postulates the most unique type of star drive yet conceived. The story reads like John W. Campbell gone berserk, and I think it's great stuff.

I like what the editors of *ANDROMEDA* are doing and I hope they continue it.

RATING 10—James Van Hise

THE HORROR ON THE BEACH
by Alan Dean Foster-$2.00-50 pages (8¼x5½)-Published by Valcour & Krueger, Inc., P.O. Box 2429, San Diego, Ca. 92112

This is subtitled, "A Tale In The Cthulhu Mythos" and is a short story by Foster, with some nice illustrations by Stephen C. Garris. Although published in 1978, I have never seen it referred to before on any listings of Foster's work which leads me to believe that he himself may tend to dismiss this as a minor effort which sort of slipped out when he was looking the other way which is somewhat surprising considering that Foster's first professional sale was of a Lovecraft pastiche titled "Some Notes Concerning a Green Box" written several years before this and with a lot more care. "The Horror On The Beach" is written with a lot of spare prose and struck me as very first-draftish, as if it had been jotted down with every intention of doing more development and a massive rewrite later. As it stands now it is just one more Lovecraft inspired tale employing more enthusiasm than craft.

Quite simply, the story involves a man and his wife who rent an old house on the coast of California and are quickly swept into a bizarre encounter with a Cthulhu cult and even features a horrified dead-of-night phone call a la "The Dunwich Horror." When Cthulhu crawls from the sea and breaks into the central character's own abode, it is handled quickly and with only a minimum of suspense. There are scenes in here that I could have seen Stephen King doing a great deal with, but then I still think Alan could have done a lot more here had he gone back and given it the rewrite it deserved, as that would have elevated this from the ordinary to the captivating. The

kind of protracted moods and eerieness that Lovecraft went after in his tales are not even attempted here; even though there are plenty of opportunities.

So although I won't go so far as labeling this a bad story, it is a disappointing one in light of all the unrealized potential.
RATING 5—James Van Hise

LOCUS #237
$1.25-24 pages-subs 12/$12.00-Published by Locus Pubs, Box 3938, S.F., Ca. 94119
SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE Vol. 2 #2
$1.25-16 pages-Subs 12/$15.00-Published by Algol Press, P.O. Box 4175, New York, N.Y. 10163

Although reviewing these two pubs simultaneously may cause both of their editors some chagrin, I think I can do a better job that way, so although these are published by people on opposite coasts, for the moment I'm going to consider them different heads of the same beast.

One of the things common to most SF fans is a quest for more information about the subjects of their interest, and with SF bigger today than ever before, there is a great deal happening in the genre all the time, and with distribution as eratic as it is these days, it is sometimes important to know in advance something is going to appear so that it can be sought out. There are also a lot of interesting personalities in SF as well as other fan oriented projects which deserve recognition and notoriety. These two publications deal with all these subjects and deal with them well.

Although very similiar in intent, thrust and execution, I don't know that I can recommend one over the other, for although they overlap in many areas of reporting, they also still present unique items and have editorial approaches that differ enough to be interesting even beyond the similiar news items covered.

Issue #237 of *Locus* has a long article on the 1980 Worldcon while the latest issue of *Chronicle* presented the first part of their Worldcon report, and because they are reported by different people, they both profer different information beyond the obvious listing of awards and personalities.

Each publication reports on coming books although *Chronicle* goes more into presenting larger size advance cover repros. *Locus*, on the other hand, provides a long list of books received the previous month so we know for sure what did come out opposed to what was promised, and thus know exactly what we might want to search for.

Chronicle, although shorter and with a couple more pages of ads than *Locus*, still comes through with different news. For instance, due to the extreme size of the attendance at the 1980 Worldcon

(7,000 people) there were some robberies, enough, in fact, that the crimes described in each zine are different (one being in hotel and the other outside hotel). As grim as this observation might be, it is important because in the case of the mugging it was clear that it would not have happened had the couple involved not been naive enough to pick up a perfect stranger in their car. I think the publicity given these crimes, though, will probably harm Boston's chance for getting another Worldcon bid anytime soon since this was the highest incident of this sort ever reported at a Worldcon, to my knowledge.

So each of these newszine's have facets to recommend them, and although you don't *need* to get both zines to obtain a well-rounded picture of the SF scene, it isn't a bad idea.
RATING: 10 (James Van Hise)

MAGICAL BLEND
$1.50-58 pages-Published by MAGICAL BLEND, P.O. Box 11303, San Francisco, Ca, 94101.

To quote titles and passages from some of the articles in Magical Blend: "Sacred Geometry"; "Jewish Money Magic"; "...We are seeking to help people to change their realities and feel this can be readily done by putting our magazine into people's homes..."; "Occult Preparation for a New Age"; is probably enough to send the average RBCC reader scurrying for cover, but believe it or not, sandwiched in with all of the flower power poetry and occult Dick and Jane primers are a few things of interest for

GARY KWAPISZ
©1980

comics/fantasy fans.

Most notable to comix fans is a three-page strip called "Visualization and Concentration" by Justin Green of "Binky Brown" fame. Green, the master of spiritual angst, is in top form here. Rather than satirizing his usual target, the Catholic church, Green goes after the very concept the rest of Magical Blend considers so urgent; trying to control one's own destiny with a little mystical mumbo jumbo and a lot of positive thinking. The results are devastating, making "Visualization", which would be hilarious wherever it was presented, all the more side-splitting when considered within its context.

Nothing else comes close to matching Green's work, although two one-page gag strips by William Van Horn are both funny and nicely rendered in a style similiar to Johnny Chambers'. The other major strip, a four-pager about American Indian sorcery by Eddie Willie, and a weird page each by Wes Jenkins and Stanley Meritakis, are eminently forgettable.

The highlight for most fantasy fans will be Michael Moorcock's tribute/biography review of Mervyn Peake, the late author of the criminally underrated Gormenghast trilogy. Moorcock was obviously a personal friend of Peake's, and his essay is filled not only with interesting information, but with a great deal of love. A pleasure to read.

As for the rest of the prose in Magical Blend, both Michael Peter Langevin's "Trapped in Transit", about a city that shifts physically from one planet to another, and Michael Epstein's "The Grand Referendum", a parable about creation, evil, modern lifestyles and the voting booth, exhibit an imagination and writing talent that's glaringly absent from the rest of the book.

Articles include one each on creative visualization, living according to natural rhythms ("going with the flow"), making money magically, auras, astrology, and the proper care and feeding of the pentacle. All are uniformly cosmicky, too elementary to be of any use to someone with even the least rudimentary experience regarding any of these forces, and unintelligible to anyone new to these fields.

The rest of Magical Blend is taken up by mostly bad poetry (a few haikus by Nancy Sue Pistorius being the exceptions here), and generally good spot illoes by the likes of Ray Garst, Mark Roland and Lou Silva. The cover, by John Oberdorf, is printed in blue on silvered cardboard, much like the first printing of the first issue of High Times was (I sure wish I'dve kept that...). Reproduction throughout the book is excellent.

To sum up, Magical Blend has a few gems surrounded by a lot of sludge. The editorial attitude is either hopelessly outdated or hopelessly esoteric, but coming from San Francisco, that's understandable, if not quite excusable. At $1.50, it's not overpriced for what it delivers. Whether or not you'd want a lot of this stuff in your home is a different matter entirely.

RATING: 6—Robert Strauss

TEJANO EXILE
$1.50-48 pages-Published by Last Gasp, 2180 Bryant Street, San Fransisco, CA 94110.

The concluding half of Jaxon's second effort at rewriting the history of Texas "as it actually happened" is far superior to the disjointed first episode, *RECUERDEN EL ALAMO*, but it doesn't live up to the high water mark set by the Comanche trilogy.

Admittedly, that's a tough act for anyone to follow. And with the story of Juan Seguin, Jaxon is tackling much subtler, more intricate questions of responsibility and loyalty than he was with Quanah Parker's. That he succeeds so well at doing it, especially after the lack of narrative continuity that almost demolished the initial book, might even make the Tejano series the more accomplished of the two from a purely technical standpoint.

But there's a heavier feel to this series, as if Jaxon felt more personally involved with the plight of the Tejanos than he did with that of the Indians. Whether or not that's so, this more serious, subjective approach is detrimental to *TEJANO EXILE*'s entertainment value. Jaxon's characteristic comic dialogue, which accomplished the difficult task of making telling counterpoint while providing comedy relief so marvelously in the Commanche series, pops up less frequently in *EXILE*, and with less devastating effect.

The framing of the panels is cinema perfect (John Ford would've been proud). The facial expressions are great in the close shots, and the action and scenery in the longer shots is grand and impressive. But again, there's nothing in *TEJANO EXILE* that's as inescapably memorable as, say, the encirclement of Palo Duro Canyon sequence at the end of *BLOOD ON THE MOON*.

If only the Commanche books hadn't been so nearly perfect in their pacing of action and exposition, comedy and pathos, the inevitable and the grotesque, I'd be able to label *TEJANO EXILE* an unqualified masterpiece. As it is, the few reservations I do have, when viewed without comparisons, are very minor indeed.

RATING: 8—Robert Strauss

J.H.

THE COMICS JOURNAL #61
$3.00-146 pages-Published by Fantagraphics, Inc., 196 West Hiviland Lane, Stamford CT 06903

This issue has a really nice, 11-page interview with Jack Jackson, seminal underground cartoonist and creator of the magnificent Juan Seguin and Commanche Moon Texas history series. In it, Jackson not only expresses a deep love for the comic art form and the fundamental joy of a true artist for the creative experience, but comes off as a friendly, open, intelligent kind of guy anyone would enjoy spending some time with.

The rest of this issue is devoted to the verbal equivalent of one of those free-for-alls on "Championship Wrestling" where Andre the Giant and the Mongolian Stomper take on 27 other guys all at once. The thirty-odd pages of letters alone, each one of which contains at least one, and often a multitude, of venal personal attacks on some artist, editor, or rival letter-writer or other, is one of the greatest examples of unwarranted cacaphony since the Tower of Babel. At least the guys on "Championship Wrestling" know they're just pretending.

After the tantrums in the letters section, Roy Thomas comes across seeming absolutely civil by waiting until the fifth page of his interview before he starts trashing the Marvel brass. R.C. Harvey's article on why DC comics are so dull is a lot like performing an unnecessarily meticulous autopsy on a belatedly exhumed corpse. And of course, there are the reviews of the latest works of graphic story art on the cutting edge of the medium (the only kind the magazine's editorial philosophy recognizes). In a nutshell, they liked *CAPTAIN AMERICA, DAREDEVIL,* the *SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL, IRON MAN* and *ANARCHY COMICS;* they didn't like *HOWARD THE DUCK, SPIDER-WOMAN, XANADU* or some corporate tie-in comics that use superheroes to encourage children to save energy, brush their teeth and buy computers. The critics have reasons for their opinions, too. Boy, do they ever have their reasons!

Is there a correlation between the fact that Mr. Jackson is the only person represented in this issue who's achieved any kind of consistent artistic vision in his work and the fact that he doesn't lower himself to pointless personal squabbling over monumentally unimportant issues? Maybe there is, maybe there isn't, but you can be sure of one thing. I'm not going to write a letter to *THE COMICS JOURNAL* about it.

RATING: 3—Robert Strauss

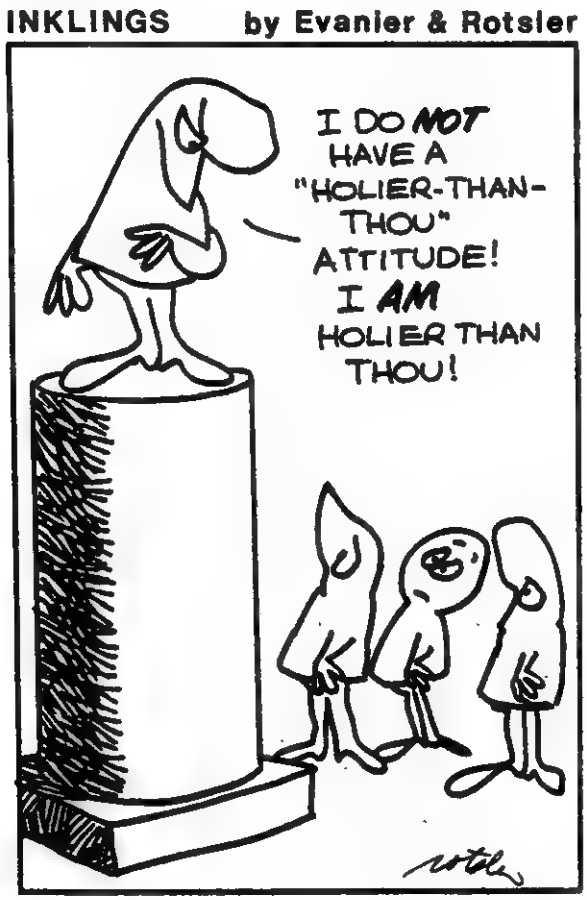
BEM #30
$2.00-40 pages-8½x12-Available from Martin Lock, 3 Marlow Court, Brittania Square, Worcester, WR1 3 DP, England.

This is the English equivalent of (choose one) A) *THE COMIC READER* B) *THE COMICS JOURNAL* C) COMICS FEATURE D) THE COMIC TIMES E) All of the above F) None of the above.

To help you make the correct choice, I'll tell you that this issue contains: Four pages of up-to-the-minute news from DC and Marvel, replete with cover repros; An article on DC sf comics; An interview with Paul Levitz; Two and a half pages of reviews of, primarily, recent Marvel and DC comics, Eight pages of letters; Lots of bad fan art; Two anal attempts at humor strips.

Now, before you choose F) None of the above, on the grounds that BEM sounds like any American clonezine and not particularly English at all, let me assure you that they consistently spell "color" with a u and use funny-looking Ls whenever they discuss money matters. There's also a three-page interview with Brian Babni, Alan McKenzie and Paul Neary, who apparently run Marvel's British operation. Interesting in a morbid way, at least to discover that Roy Thomas isn't the world's only comics professional with a severe persecution complex.

One expects droll humor from the English, but John Hay is the only one who delivers when he describes Batman in a review as "the World's



Greatest Detective (or bully, or schizo... the poor chap's awfully serious these days, since Robin moved out in fact. Was Dr. Wertham right?)". Funniest and most astute fan observation I've seen in a long time.

There's also a bizarre, poorly drawn sf strip that proves Americans aren't the only people who dont like Iranians.

So the question still remains. Is BEM A) Informative B) Elitist C) Fannish D) Opportunistic E) All of the above F) None of the above. The correct answer, of course, is yes. The Englishman's appreciation of comics art is apparently at the same level as the American's, which makes one pity the fact that the Battle of Quebec went the way it did. If General Montcalm had won, we'd all be reading *PILOTE* instead.

RATING: 5—Robert Strauss

LOLLAPALOOSA #4
$1.00-20 pages (9½ x 7)-Available from Mitch O'Connell, 5453 N. Lakewood, Chicago, IL 60640

You might call this a fanzine out of bounds. "Who's to blame" spoken with the inflection one usually reserves for "who cares" is about the only reaction something like this could ever hope to elicit.

What we've got here are eighteen pages of fair fan art and pro art that's been seen elsewhere, reproduced better. The inside front cover contains a table of contents, editorial indicia, and plugs for books published by the editor's friends. Oh yes, there's also some lettering on the cover.

That's it. Whole book. Apparently, the publisher isn't entirely suicidal, since a $1.25 price has been crossed out on the cover. Accompanying flier indicates this issue costs 60¢ plus 40¢ for postage, which equals one dollar. If I get to the Cove theatre before 5:45, I can see a double feature Italian movie for one dollar. As for LOLLAPALOOSA, all I have to say is, ciao.

RATING: 2—Robert Strauss

FOOD COMICS
$1.25-32 pages-Published by Educomics, Box 40246, San Francisco, CAL. 94140.

Had Karl Marx written *DAS KAPITAL in easy-to-read-comic-book-form, you can bet an ancestor of Leonard Rifas's would've published it. So far, Rifas's series of Educomics have been high on rhetoric, low on entertainment value.* *FOOD COMICS* is no different, and it's a pity because the subject matter is not only inportant, but rife with creative possibilities.

The book is divided in half, one for children and one for adults. The children's section is the most inventive. Rifas's own funny vegetables versus the king of Candy Island is an interesting, albeit weird, attempt to depict sugar addiction in terms of a class struggle. It would've worked a lot better if he'd named the carrot Carl and the tomato Tommy instead of the other way around.

The adult section is less tasty, almost pure agitprop that a dash of Crumb here and a pinch of Boxell there can't hope to save. Covers by R. Diggs and Rifas are both excellent, probably the best things about the book, but I can't say for sure since I haven't tried out Trina's or Moira's recipes yet.

It is possible to make interesting, educational comics. *FACTS O' LIFE* and Gonick's *CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE* spring immeidately to mind. It's even possible to do it when propaganda is your main intent, as *GIVE ME LIBERTY*, in my opinion the best underground comic ever published, amply proved.

I'm a hypoglycemic vegetarian who's sympathetic to the people of Guatemala. I also wish Mr. Rifas would put more of an emphasis on creativity and less on pedantry in his future publications. As a great philosopher once said, you can catch more flies with honey than you can with MSG.

RATING: 5—Robert Strauss

THE ART OF JOHN BYRNE
$5.95, 68 pages, published by S.Q. Publications Inc., Box 7, Dyker Heights Station, Brooklyn, NY 11228

This is volume one and is a very well conceived and handsomely produced book. It sports both full color front and back covers as well as on the inside front and inside back. Unlike some books of this type which have been glutted with sketches and the like, most of the drawings in here are complete in every way and include art which has never seen print before anywhere. The prime feature of new unpublished art is a very nice 25 page sf story about a man marooned on a planet and what he finds there. I found the ending of it, though, to be unnecessarily contrived and lacking a bit in logic, but otherwise it's excellent art (inked as well as pencilled by Byrne) and it tells the story without a single word beyond the title.

The rest of the issue includes a full color centerspread of the X-Men, a long interview with Byrne, an index and a lot of fine miscellaneous art. It's a very well produced book which should disappoint no one who is a fan of John Byrne's art and who expects only superior work in a volume of this type.

RATING: 10 (James Van Hise)

40¢
24P
#2
NO 24
R.B.C.C. COMICS GROUP
DISAPPROVED BY THE COMIC CODE AUTHORITY
B.C.C.
THE EMPIRE STRIKES MITCH
FRIZZ...
HISS
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weese
yark!
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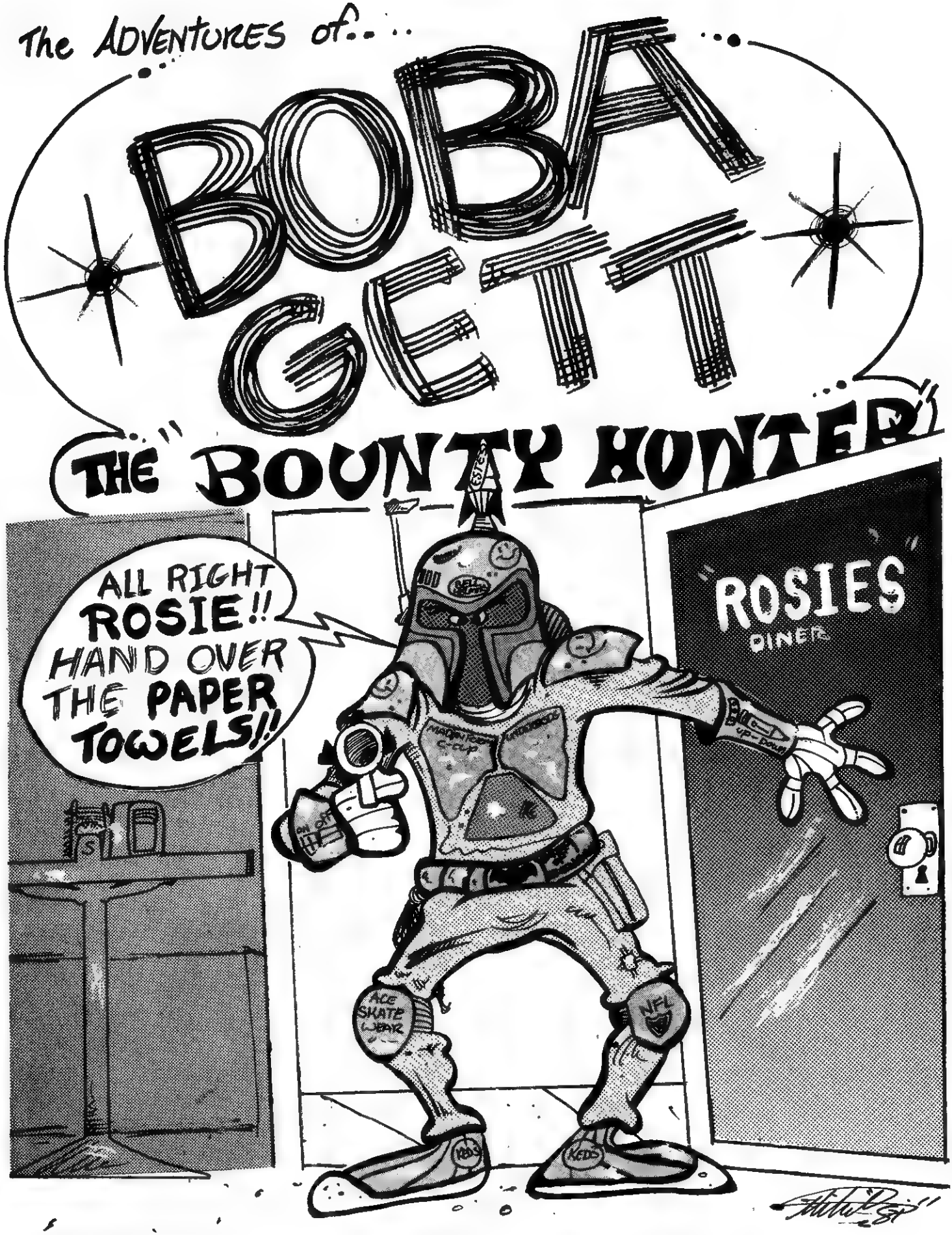
DARTH VADAR

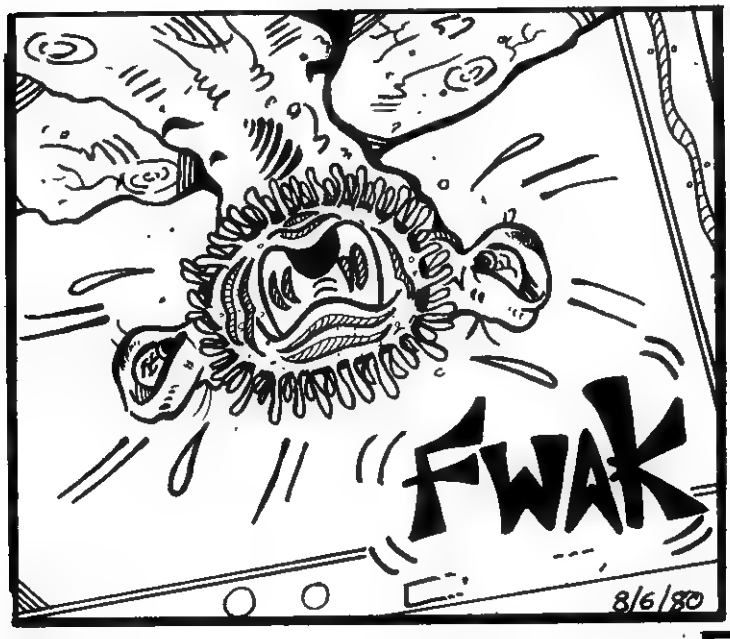

The ADVENTURES of...
BOBA GETT
THE BOUNTY HUNTER
ALL RIGHT ROSIE!! HAND OVER THE PAPER TOWELS!!
ROSIES DINER
ACE SKATE WEAR
NFL
KEDS

STAR WARZ
THE EMPIRE STRIKES OUT
sniff
PANT
weese
sniff
weese
Mitch '80
MMMM!
HAN!!
I was only kidding about the "Kissing a wookie" Crack!
Call him OFF!!
Mitch '80

SEE! MY HANDS ARE DIRTY TOO!
(POINT)
((POINT))
(POINT)

ANYONE FOR A HANSICKLE?
AND WEILENMAN

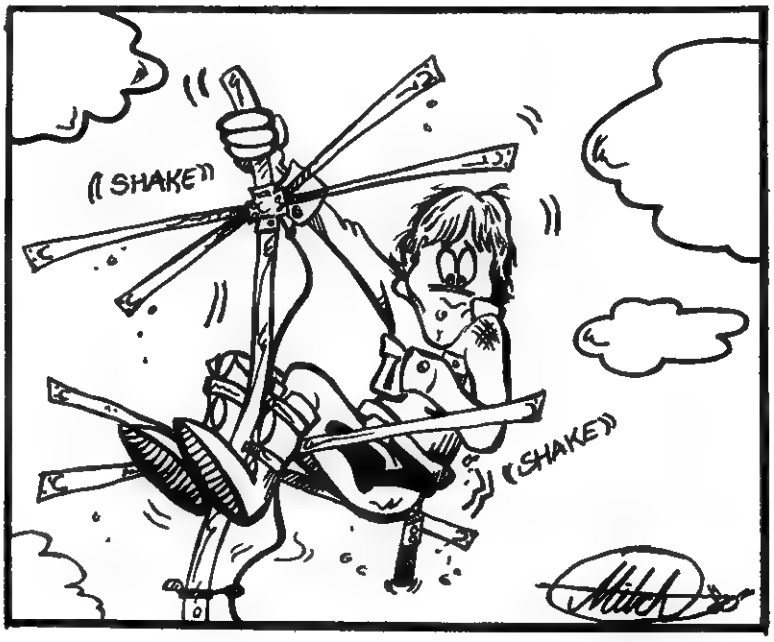
MEANWHILE..IN THE COCKPIT OF THE FALCON.
!?!
"CLATTER"


FWAK
8/6/80

AAAAAAH!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
SHAKE
SHAKE

HEY HUN! THE T.V.'S ON THE FRITZ AGAIN. WILL YOU CHECK THE AERIAL?
SURE THING!
"8/5/80"

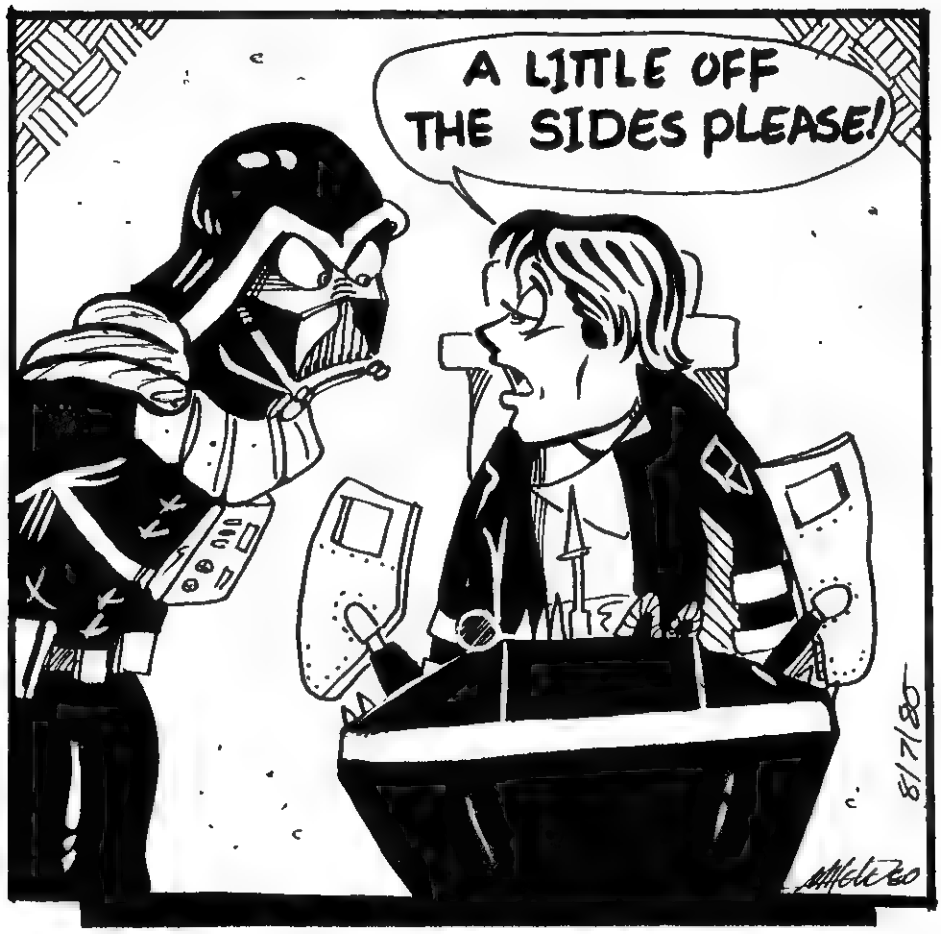
((SHAKE))
((SHAKE))


((SHAKE))
((SHAKE))
Mitch

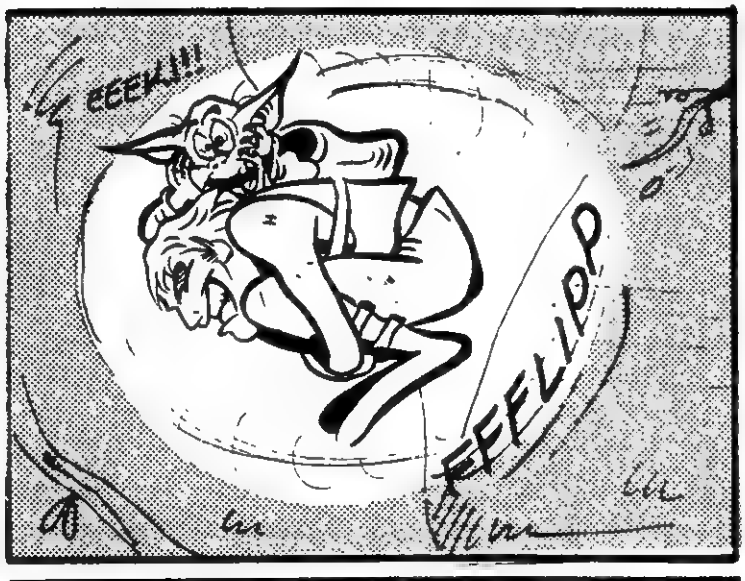
"URP!"
EEEEK!
8/16/80

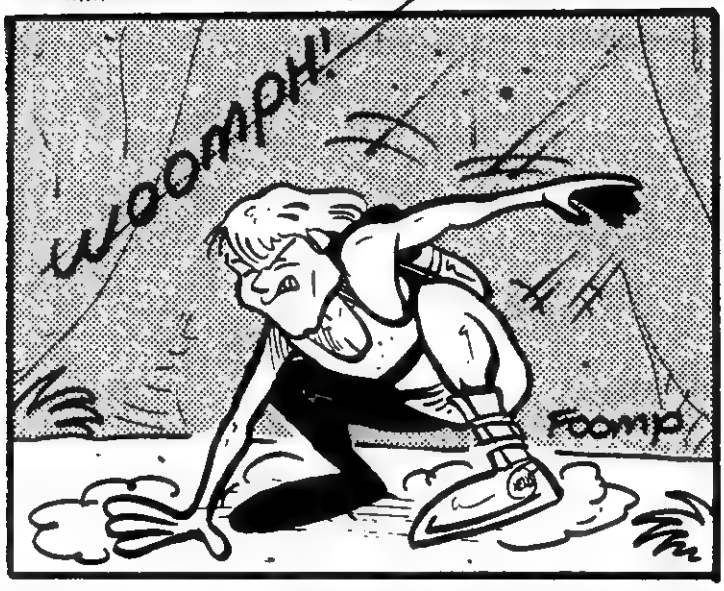
I'VE HEARD OF BUTTERFLIES IN THE STOMACH BUT THIS IS RIDICULOUS!

I Ain't Got no BODY...
'80


A LITTLE OFF THE SIDES PLEASE!
8/7/80

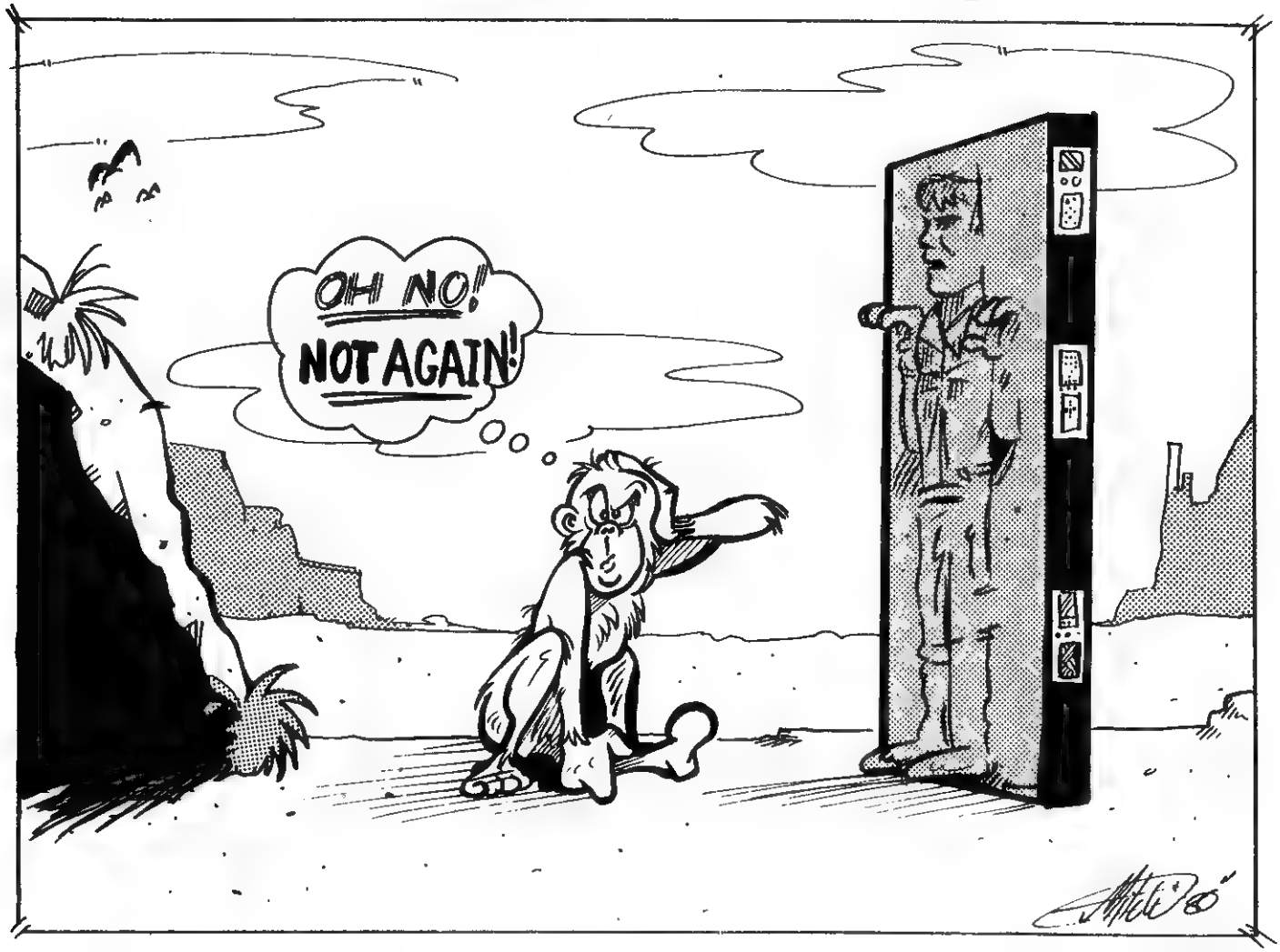
MEANWHILE BACK ON DAGOBLAH...



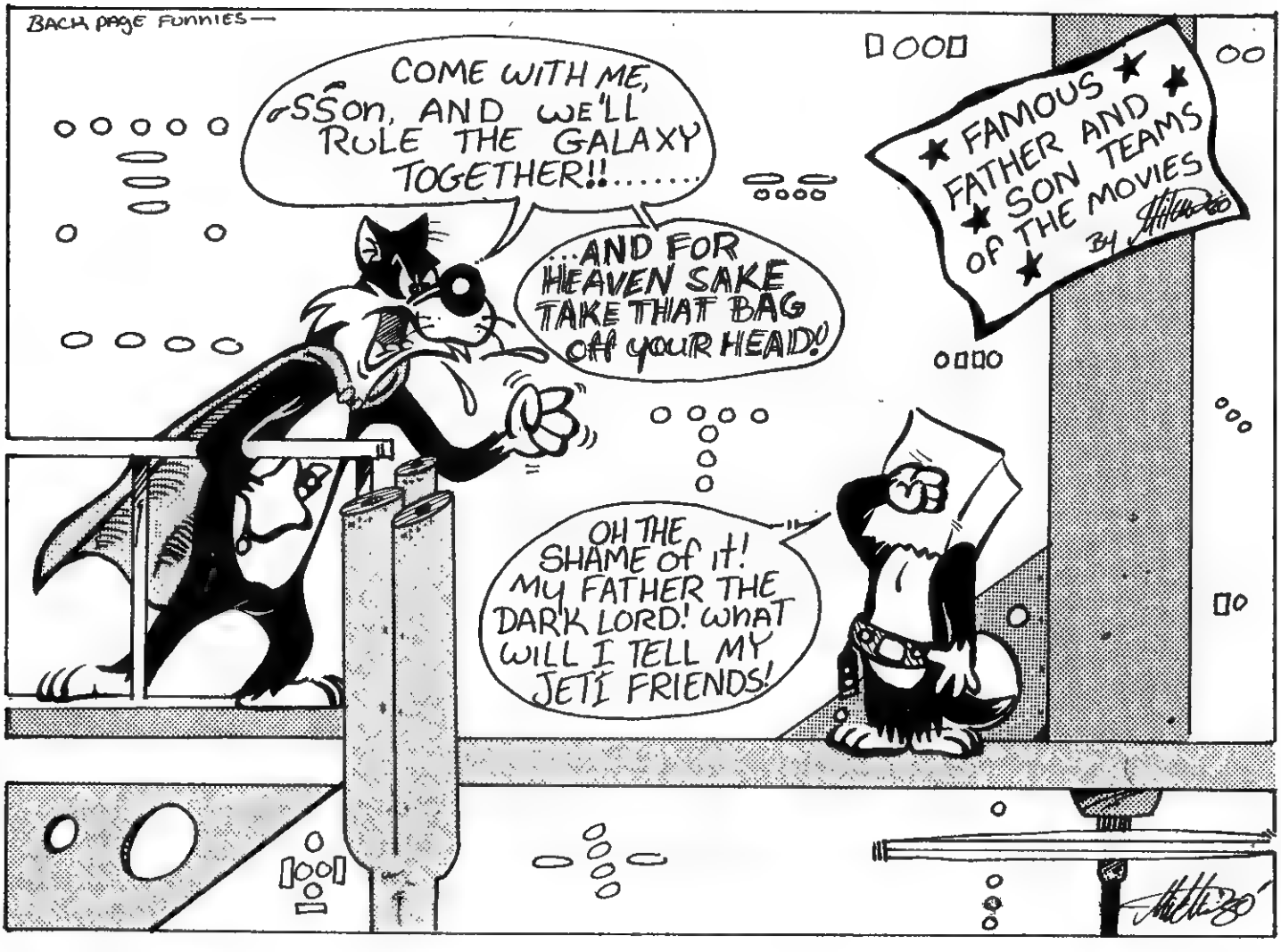


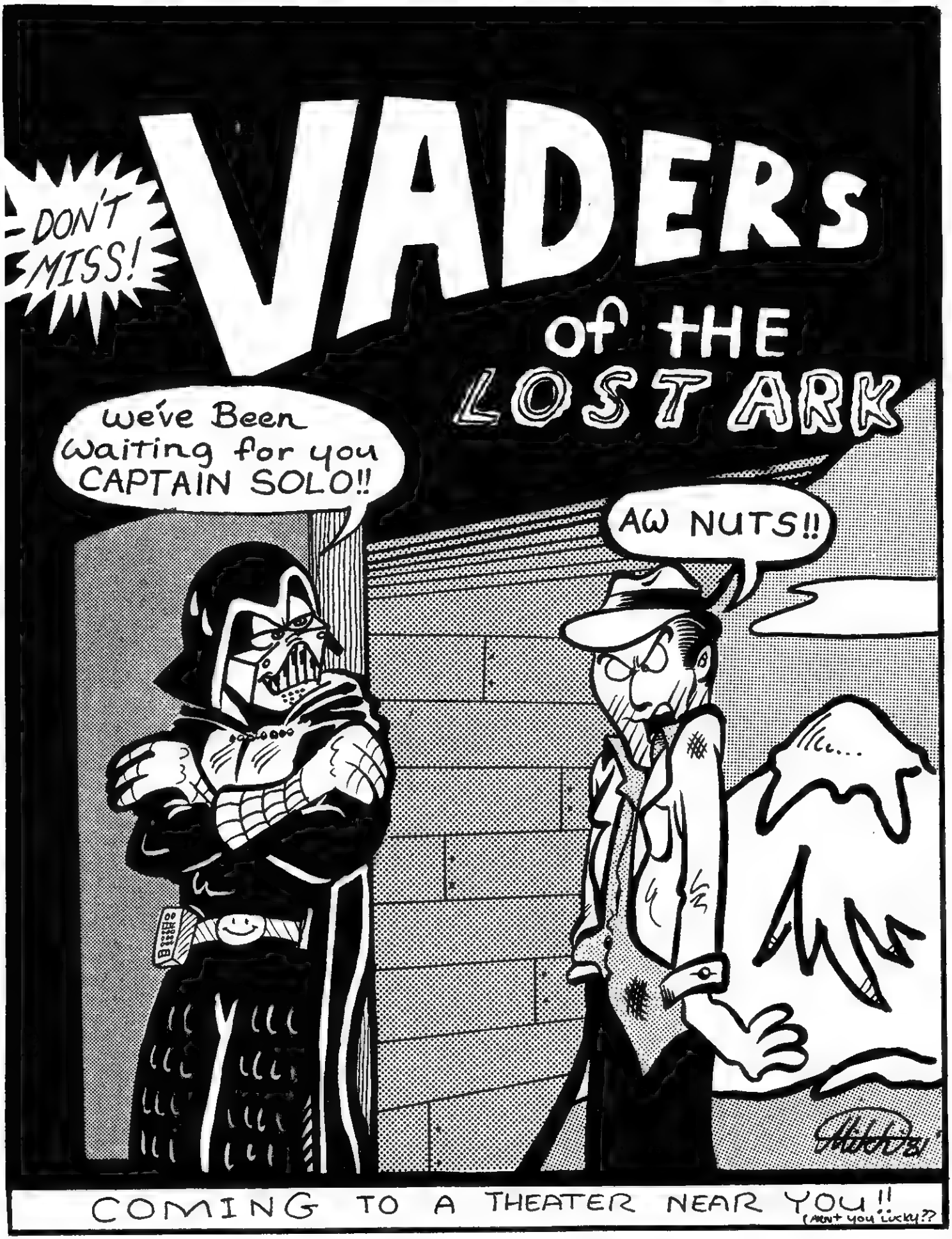
woops...
AAAGGGHH!!
For Some Reason I Get the DISTINCT FEELING THAT if LUKE KEEPS This KIND of BeHAVIOUR UP...THE REVENGE of the JETI MAY COME SOONER THAN LUKE or the producers MAY think

OOOH what a feeling to own a TOY-YODA!
YODA ACTION FIGURE
He's pushing me!! He's really pushing me!!


OH NO! NOT AGAIN!

Buzzz...
?!
OF COURSE I'M (PANT) YOUR FATHER! DON'T YOU SEE THE (HISS) RESEMBLANCE!!


BACH PAGE FUNNIES—
COME WITH ME, SSON, AND WE'LL RULE THE GALAXY TOGETHER!!.....
...AND FOR HEAVEN SAKE TAKE THAT BAG OFF YOUR HEAD!
★ FAMOUS ★ FATHER AND ★ SON TEAMS ★ OF THE MOVIES
By
OH THE SHAME OF IT! MY FATHER THE DARK LORD! WHAT WILL I TELL MY JETI FRIENDS!


DON'T MISS!
VADERS of the LOST ARK
We've Been waiting for you CAPTAIN SOLO!!
AW NUTS!!
...
COMING TO A THEATER NEAR YOU!!
(AREN'T YOU LUCKY??

METAL AND THE WHITE BOY'S COOL

by Robert Strauss

During his stint as editor of *HEAVY METAL*, Ted White didn't so much establish a new direction for the magazine as clarify and refine the one it already had. Certainly, the editorial attitude switched rather abruptly from Sean Kelly's distanced, punk-snobbish approach (which often made *HM* appear edited by computer, doubtless intentionally) to a more accessible, down home point of view. But more important, Ted White brought with him the true affectionado's love, respect and critical understanding of the medium. As fine a job as he often did, Kelly's issues never transcended the stigma of having been put together by a competent but dispassionate hired hand.

White *filled Heavy Metal* with stuff that just couldn't be found anywhere else, at least not in English. Of course, *HM* had been known for doing that since its first issue, but until White's arrival, it depended on heavy doses of less experimental material that was available elsewhere (Morrow's "Buck Rogers, "Orion" and superheroines, Chaykin's "Gideon Faust" and excerpts from the Byron Priess books, conventional sf such as "Starcrown" and "Alien", and most obviously, an unnatural dependence on Richard Corben) to counterbalance the more outre excesses of Moebius, Claveloux, Montelier, and their like.

White quickly shifted *HM*'s focus toward the new, the untried, the original and the challenging. To his credit, he also set a higher standard of excellence. Being different was not enough, as it had been previously. It was now required that the experiment, whether involving content, presentation or both, had to work.

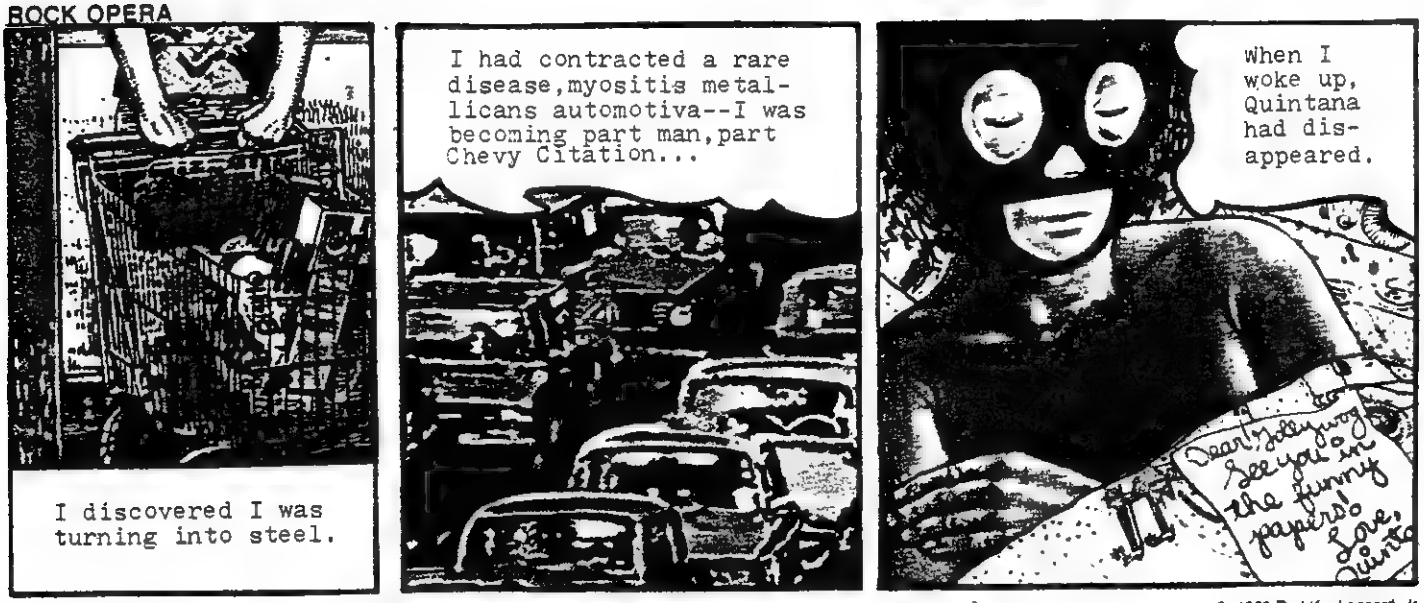
The list of successes is impressive: Picotto and Tardi's "Circus", wherein the mood-drenched coloring compliments the fantastic theme of the storyline with jarring effect; The kineticism of Mirko Irlic's "Survival"; The moving combination of geometric and impressionistic artstyles in the Schuiten Brothers' "The Crevasse"; The wonderful visual and spiritual pastels of Shinobu Kaze's "Violence Becomes Tranquility"; Jeronaton's "Champakou", with its genuinely adult themes of desire, jealousy, commitment and love told in a crackerjack fantasy fable with art as dazzling as it is naturalistic; The amazing evolution of Enki Bilal from cutesy-pie sf satirist into a first rate teller of mature, multi-layered visual stories like "Progress" and "Only the Plitch"; Even gag strips such as Wrightson's "Captain Sternn", Keenan and Maher's "Earth Versus the Flying Wallendas" and Moebius' "Mysteries of Eroticism"; All done with a mastery of technique and a clarity of vision often lacking in the pre-White issues.

New talents discovered, or at least exposed to us by Mr. White included the aforementioned Irlic, Kaze, Jeronaton and Schuiten Brothers, as well as such equally gifted artists as Dick Matena, whose the only person I've seen improve on Alex Toth's style with his parables of existential corruption, and the team of Ribera and Godard, whose irreverent epics are probably the best written, and certainly the most colorful, *HM*'s ever run. As for the veterans, well, for my money Caza, Kirchner, Moebius, Druillet, et al can do no, or at least very little, wrong. White has reinforced this opinion by printing some of their most sublime work to date.

But most exciting of all have been the contributions that, at first glance, seem the most marginal. I'm referring to the half page and sidebar strips that shared the text pages with the unappreciated, tho often discussed media columns. With just a few exceptions, these little strips were consistently the most inventive, provocative and quietly well-crafted in any given issue.

Look at what Rich Veitch does in "Li'l Tiny Comics" in #41. I'm not just talking about the great Henry Miller narration, but the way the character's sense of futility and isolation is depic-

ROCK OPERA


I discovered I was turning into steel.
I had contracted a rare disease, myositis metallicans automotiva--I was becoming part man, part Chevy Citation...
When I woke up, Quintana had disappeared.
Dear Golliwog, See you in the funny papers! Love, Quinta

© 1980 Rod Kierkegaard Jr.

Have a nice day!
For weeks I haunted the halls of "La Mall" like a ghost.
Thank you much!
surviving on the vapors of Muzak and airborne hallucinogens.
Have a good one!
--surfacing in the daylight to pose, in a frayed leisure suit, as a Modern Shopper...
Hopefully!

ted by a series of diminishing, circular portraits on the first page, long ascending steps on the second, and the drop down the side of a cliff balanced by a line of unemployed workers going up the other side of the panels on the third. The emotional ups and downs that have brought the character to his current state of hopelessness are graphically felt by the reader.

Howard Cruze's several small contributions are light years ahead of anything else I've seen by him, determined assaults on ego and fanatacism (different sides of the same coin) that use his cartoony, wide-eyed drawing style to its greatest effect. And, of course, Kirchner's "Bus", started before White's editorship, is always interesting, if only by virtue of the fact that he manages to think up so many new situations involving the damn thing.

But far and away, in my opinion, White's greatest contribution to *HM*, to the world of comic art, is the discovery of Rod Kierkegaard, Jr. "Rock Opera", to my knowledge, is the first anti-fantasy ever produced in the field. By anti-fantasy, I mean that it blows apart every dream, from space beings to primitivism to media stardom to shopping malls to relationships, that mankind has ever deluded intself into mistaking for salvation. Poignantly written, beautifully drawn in the subtlest (and best) way, this lyrical tragedy about a lost golliwog stoically going through the prescribed motions of trying to discover who, where and why he is, is heart wrenching in its understatement and overwhelming in its implications. If ever a magazine and a strip were made for each other, *HEAVY METAL* and "Rock Opera" are the ones.

Before you assume that my opinion of Ted White lies somewhere between those I hold for God and Stanley Kubrick, let me assure you that I recognize he's not perfect. His weak points as an editor stem from the same places that his strengths do. While his love for the media of the fantastic

SIR CAT, UNLESS I AM MISTAKEN, YOU HAVE JUST SPOKEN INTELLIGIBLY; THE FIRST MEMBER OF YOUR TRIBE EVER, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, TO DO SO!
FRANKLY, I AM, AMAZED!
SIR APE, OUR OWN ASTONISHMENT AT THIS EVENT IS NO LESS THAN YOUR OWN, FOR WE BELIEVED THAT ONLY CATS POSSESSED THIS ABILITY!
STILES ELUPOFF
...MOREOVER, WHAT IS FURTHER ASTONISHING IS THE FACT THAT WE BOTH SEEM TO SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE...
...NAMELY FELISIAN!
IT CERTAINLY IS A WONDERFUL THING!
WOTTA COINCIDENCE!
NEXT: ENTER MENELIX XX CHAKA!

and his openness to alternate points of view, including, by his own admission, those induced by drugs, provide him with an eclectic and educated editorial sense, they sometimes evoke enthusiasm for pieces that pander to these interests while operating on less accomplished artistic levels.

The two most glaring examples of this unfortunate situation are the series' "Professor Thintwhistle", which succumbs to every obvious, sophomoric sf cliche in the book, not to mention sexism, racism and a condescending narrative style that renders it totaly unreadable, and "Changes", which tries so hard to be hip that it dates while you read it. Interestingly, Matt Howarth has the same difficulty with female and ethnic characters that Lupoff and Stiles do.

Ted White's strengths and weaknesses as an editor are best illustrated by comparing his last two issues, numbers 43 and 44. 43 is a special Rock edition, another one of the editor's personal interests. The quality of this issue is consistently below par. Not poor, not incompetent, but just workmanlike. One really feels the milieu and theme substituting for true creativity. Even Druillet's piece falls short of his usual level of excellence, although to be fair, Moebius' "Rock City" is exceptional (but so's everything he does), and Matena's "Heartbreak Hotel" is his finest work, and probably the only worthwhile thing that ever resulted from Elvis Presley's death.

Issue 44, on the other hand, contains a superb selection of material. Martin Springett, another White discovery, launches a frontal assault on visual reality and conceptualization with his tour-de-force "Awaken", Nicole Claveloux's "Sans Family" explores uncharted social and expressive territory, (Caza contributes "Metropolitan Opera", his most realized and terrifyingly absurd work to date, and Veitch, Moebius, Kierkegaard and Bilal are all in top form. As is usually the case, Ted White put his critical instincts before his personal preoccupations, and the results were stunning.

I'm going to miss Mr. White at *HEAVY METAL*. While it always was and no doubt will continue to be an interesting, innovative magazine, it was White's taste, commitment and, yes, his flaws that often made it far more, that often made it inspiring.

What about the columns? Well, I liked 'em, but I won't miss 'em too much. The best one, Bhob Stewart's "Flix", apparently will remain, and since he's the only one who turned me onto something great that I didn't already know about (Jerzy Skolimowsky's *THE SHOUT*, probably the most terrifying film I've seen all year), I can't bitch too much. What did give me pause was what I saw when I opened up the first Len Mogel-edited issue: Richard Corben back in full color, making *HEAVY METAL* safe for the unwashed masses again. Oh well, I still have my 1980 issues to cherish (they hold up well under repeated readings), and Ted White to thank for a year of the best illustrated adult fantasy available in the English language.

A fiery horse with the speed of light...
A cloud of dust and a hearty...

HI-YO-SILVER!

THE RETURN OF THE LONE RANGER

"An enjoyable, entertaining sixteen million dollar television script."

The Legend of the Lone Ranger has been shrouded in controversy almost from the beginning. As soon as the first new version of The Lone Ranger legend in over twenty years was announced, the Wrather Corporation (owners of all Lone Ranger theatrical rights for over thirty years, and thus Clayton Moore's former employer) took legal action to prevent Moore from appearing in public in a mask or identifying himself as the Lone Ranger in any capacity. Jack Wrather's company apparently was afraid that the witless general public wouldn't understand that the man who played the Lone Ranger twenty-five years ago was not the same man who appeared as the Lone Ranger in the 1981 feature film. When the dust had finally settled, Clayton Moore was reduced to wearing wraparound sunglasses and was so embittered by the experience that when the producers of the film attempted to make it up to him by giving him a role in the movie, he flatly turned them down. But that wasn't the only controversy.

Around December of 1979, the new Lone Ranger and Tonto, Clinton Spilsbury and Michael Horse, made an appearance at the Mann's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. The trouble is that it was a bit of a fiasco because some unthinking publicist didn't think the whole thing through very well and the two performers appeared for only a few minutes, refused to talk to *anyone*, and then were hustled off. The Press was understandably curious about what the new Lone Ranger sounded like and afterwards cracked jokes that Spilsbury's voice was so awful that Clayton Moore was going to dub it in the film. An amusing idea, and closer to the truth than anyone imagined at the time.

On February 27, 1981, *The Legend of the Lone Ranger* had a sneak preview in San Diego which bore a heading which explained that this was a work in progress which would be further refined before its regular release. The one hour and thirty-six minute film which I saw, though, seemed pretty complete other than a couple spots which didn't seem to have all the music yet and some jumps in film quality which would undoubtedly be ironed out later. But these were little things and I must admit that I was pleasantly surprised.

While the film is basically true to the Lone Ranger's origin as it s been portrayed before, this time the story begins much earlier than the canyon ambush on the Texas Rangers. The film opens with John Reid as a boy hiding a young Tonto from marauding outlaws, only to see those same outlaws murder his own parents. Tonto takes John to his village where he lives for a short time learning the things other young warriors learn until his older brother, Dan, comes and sends him back east.

Years later John Reid returns to Texas as a lawyer and a man bent on helping his brother. This leads into the massacre of the Texas Rangers and Tonto once more finding his blood brother whom he recognizes by a medallion he had given young John to wear.

Unlike earlier versions of this story, Tonto isn't quite so superficial, as he expresses his contempt for the way whites have treated the Indian and refuses to be bound to a reservation, but rather to search for justice for his people just as John Reid wants justice for the murder of his brother and the other Texas Rangers. In fact, near the end of the film when President Grant asks Tonto if there's any way he can repay him for his help, Tonto asks him to keep the treaties which the U.S. has signed with his brothers. Grant replies that he'll try, and the bitter irony of that was not lost on anyone in the audience. If audience reaction is any

measure of the possible success of a film, then this one has a hopeful future because the audience loved it as they cheered and clapped and even applauded the first time the adult Tonto (exceedingly well played by Michael Horse) appears. In fact, even though Spilsbury is surprisingly good as The Lone Ranger, Michael Horse is even more effective as Tonto, capturing a sense of individuality and pride that makes him much more than just the Lone Ranger's companion. Here he is clearly the Ranger's equal.

Clinton Spilsbury looks much better on screen than in any of the publicity photos which have been published of him. But as good as he is, the producers apparently weren't satisfied with him because they found it necessary to have his voice dubbed by another actor. Unless you knew this ahead of time, though, you won't have any resaon to notice it because the dubbing here is done far more skillfully than I've generally seen it handled before. I expect, though, that this and other considerations will make things tough sledding for this actor when the film is released because, like Sam Jones who played Flash Gordon, Spilsbury has skeletons which the press will quickly unearth. First, he seems to have an antagonistic attitude about doing publicity for the film and in fact in the recent New Years parade wherein the Lone Ranger and Tonto appeared, it was a substitute who rode in Spilsbury's saddle even though Michael Horse did ride in the parade as Tonto. But much more than this, unsavory stories about Spilsbury's performance off-screen filtered out including tales involving his slapping a waitress across the face and being barred from two watering holes in Santa Fe where the film was on location. When Jim Steranko questioned director William Fraker about these reports in *Mediascene/Prevue #43*, Fraker did not deny them. So only time will tell if time will tell.

Director William Fraker brings a lot of style to this modern big screen translation of the western legend and at times is clearly attempting to emulate John Ford, even going so far as shooting on some of the same desert locations as Ford used in his classic award-winning film *Stagecoach*.

There were reports that the film had some location problems from snow and this is evident on screen when in a scene involving a railroad water tower we suddenly see large patches of snow in the background which appear nowhere else in the film. Considering many of the scenes involve desert and near desert conditions, that snow is rather jarring in the continuity.

That and other problems in the film are all minor ones, but one in particular was picked up on by the audience and caused quite a few chuckles. When the Lone Ranger and Tonto invade Butch Cavendish's (Christopher Lloyd) fortress, they keep finding open doors to slip into and hide, only one of which they force in themselves. It seems a tad too convenient when they hide in three doorways within five minutes. It was the only inadvertent humor in the film.

At only just over an hour and a half, the film seems to end very quickly because over half of that time is spent on the Lone Ranger's origin. With the average big-budget film running at close to two hours these days, it's not unreasonable to have expected this one to be a little longer as well, especially when so much time had to be spent on setting up the story and exposition. Plus, there is the basic problem of so much of the story being familiar. Although the extra characterization between the Lone Ranger and Tonto helps to make this more interesting, this character interaction ceases once the Ranger dons his mask as Tonto then slips once more into the background while the Lone Ranger develops a studied cold gaze apparently designed to make him look serious in an outfit which on its face is a bit outlandish in a western setting. Still there is a genuine thrill when he stands over his brother's grave and vows justice and then turns around to the camera where we see him wearing the mask for the first time. This dissolves into some almost ethereal slow-motion footage of the Ranger and Tonto riding through the desert and I'm sure it'll all turn out to be the long clip which will be shown on teevee whenever the film is reviewed, as well as part of the theatrical trailer.

As interesting as the film is, what with touches like Jason Robards as U.S. Grant and even a *homage* to stunt great Yakima Canutt thrown in in the form of a variation on his famous under-the-stage-coach bit, the film is still really only a sixteen million dollar television script. It's entertaining and it's fun (*real* fun, not dumb fun like *Flash Gordon*) but even though it reaches it doesn't quite grasp the scope a theatrical feature needs to deliver on the wide screen. The film apparently did have script problems because William Fraker said that there were two different scripts when he came on the project and the screen credits list four writers on the final draft which was filmed. They apparently did try to make that transfer from the small screen to the big screen, but inhibited as they were by the long origin retelling and then wrapping up the Butch Cavendish story more quickly than they should have, the film falls just a bit short of its goal. I keep remembering that the 1956 theatrical Lone Ranger film managed the transition quite well, so it's not impossible. But in the meantime, even if *The Legend of the Lone Ranger* isn't a great film, it is a good one, and certainly much better than I gave them credit for being able to deliver. It deserves to succeed and spawn sequels which can delve more into the characters of the principals and the nation as it existed in 1870.

—JVH

MEGACON BLUES

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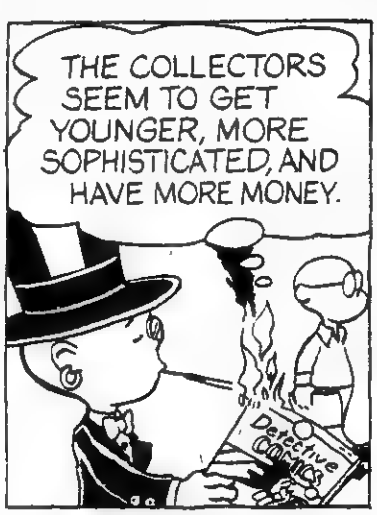


AN INTERVIEW WITH MIKE FRIEDRICH

Conducted by Gerald Brown

Looking back on it, Star Reach *seems a fitting name for a series of independently financed comics magazines carrying the work of professional comics artists and writers, doing what they instinctively knew they did best: create; skillfully, imaginatively, independently. There is a great distinction between doing work you're assigned and paid to do, and doing work for the privilege of doing it; something that's needed, something important to the creator. Mike Friedrich was one of the first independent publishers to bring this distinction to the limelight, occasionally eliciting rare flashes of insight and imagination from his pro contributors through this alternate medium, sometimes falling short of expectation. That* Star Reach *was a noble experiment there is no doubt. Through the series, readers were privileged to see work done by their favorite artists and writers they would never have seen in commercial comics.*

Mike Friedrich was born in 1949 in Oakland, California, raised south of there in a town called Hayward, where he remained through high school. He attended high school in Oakland and college at Santa Clara University, near San Jose, which is about 50 miles south of San Francisco. He sold his first comics script to DC Comics about a month before graduating from high school, a date he knows well: May 10, 1967. He continued working for DC through college, a job which helped to finance his way through college. During summer breaks, he worked in New York writing scripts.

He was the third fan to be hired by DC after Jim Shooter and Cary Bates, one of the first to come to New York to do work on a regular basis. After college he began working as an assistant editor, Left DC after a couple of months, and began writing for Marvel around Christmas, 1971. A couple of years earlier he had free-lanced a couple of western stories for Marvel, and he knew some of the people who worked there, particularly assistant editor Roy Thomas, who became editor just as he was hired, so he was no stranger to his new employer.

"I couldn't really stand living in New York for more than ten months," he explained, so he went back to California, where he continued to write for Marvel through 1976. Increasing frustrations with the limitations imposed on the medium, however, prompted him to try his own hand at generating a comics line, an independent line editorially less restricted, giving more freedom to contributors. He began publishing in 1974, went to full-time publishing in 1976, and continued through to the fall of 1979. About a year ago he assumed the post of direct sales manager at Marvel, a position which requires him to travel across the country, checking distribution outlets on the efficiency of distribution channels, and also making some attempt to guage what aspects of the comics medium are most sought after; most saleable.

He has also written stories for some of the smaller comics companies, including Skywald.

This interview was conducted at the Fantasy Book Store, headquarters for Glenwood Distribution, this past April.

FRIEDRICH: (In response to a question concerning whether he had written in any medium other than comics.) All of my writing experience has been in the comics field, and my executive experience has been in the comics field.

GB: What did yoiu study at Santa Clara University?

FRIEDRICH: I have a degree in English that is totally worthless. I knew I had a full-time position in the comics field by the time I was in my second year in college. But I decided that the environment for learning in college was far more valuable to me than short-term employment, and as long as I could continue to scrape through and stay in

school, I kept doing that. It broadened my horizons. I really think that having a general background more related to attitudes is more important that just information or specific training. Everything I learned about writing was on the job. Everything I knew about production, sales and the rest was learned on the job. I'm completely self-taught. I don't have a business degree; one econ course and that was it.

GB: What was the appeal of comics that drew you to the medium?

FRIEDRICH: In high school I was very withdrawn. I had no social life at all. Comics provided that for me. I began writing letters to the editors and got a number of them printed during the 60s, 50 or so of them, primarily to the DC Comics. Through those letter columns I became correspondent with a number of other letter writers. One of them is still a good friend of mine. It also put me in touch with fanzines and this whole thing. I became part of a larger community through the mail.

There weren't conventions and there weren't comics stores, period. There were conventions just starting to crop up back east, but I didn't have any access to them. I think there were one or two here in St. Louis during that period. But (the letter writing) sort of provided me with a social life; a connection to the world.

Somehow through all of this I built up a huge ego while at the same time being very shy and withdrawn. I said to myself, "Hey, I can do better than what I'm reading." I was beginning to understand how things worked as devices for stories. I began to say, "Hey, I'd like to do this with a character. It'd be more interesting to read if *this* kind of story were told." Apparently there were people in New York who agreed with that and let me have a chance at doing it. That's how I broke into comics. I think what sustained me in it was the fun of it all, and I enjoyed the creative aspect. I got frustrated with it later, having told the same story once or twice, when it was being required that I would have to tell it again and again and again. The same formulas had to be used. The kinds of characters that could be put into comics were of a very limited variety. The genre was very limited. I wanted to break out and do my own material.

I was very fortunate during college. The first comics store in the country so far as I'm aware, opened up three miles down the road from where I lived. I tapped into that pretty quickly; got to know the guy that ran the store, Bob Sidebottom, and began to learn a little bit about distribution. He was also a big underground comix distributor on the side. I began to learn about the economics of the comics business. The attitude of the comix creators at the time was that they just got together and said they'd do their own comics, pricing them based on what it cost to produce them, rather than basing price on what they thought the books should sell for. They were able to make a go of it. That gave me the idea that, if I was having trouble doing the stuff I wanted to do, and there were other artists I knew who were having trouble, I should just put some money together and get them published.

It was through Bob Sidebottom that I got introduced to the whole underground field. He knew of lot of the publishers and the artists, and he would tell me about how the business was set up and structured. I always kept my ear open for the business information. It always fascinated me how that process works. I think I am more fascinated by that now than I am by the actual comics.

GB: The undergrounds seem to have submerged. Would you care to conjecture why?

FRIEDRICH: I can't speak for everybody. There are economic reasons and there are cultural reasons, and there are personal reasons. The economic reasons were that the marketing of the underground books, their distribution, had been done through kind of fringe outlets: adult paraphernalia shops, head shops, porno stores. When the 1973 Supreme Court obscenity decision came down, there was a panic. It was a psychological thing: very few people were actually affected by the law, but everyone panicked over the *possible* effect of the law. The result was

that a lot of the stores dumped the material and got out of it. The publishers never really recovered from that. In an economic sense, the only one that is now publishing on anywhere near the scale that he was is Denis Kitchen, because his stuff was a little more mainstream oriented.

On a personal level, there were all these people who were putting out what amounted to reactionary comics: "Hey, wow, I can draw all the repressed sexist fantasies I've got," and they do it once or twice, and there is enough audience to create a market. But then the customers and artists get tired of it.

In addition, the truly creative and successful folks like Corben and Crumb and Shelton found themselves burned out of ideas after a while, or (like Corben) have moved on to more lucrative markets. Shelton hates the Freak Brothers from what I'm told. He found himself trapped by them in a sense, and many other creators of popular ideas have had this problem.

Also, I think the undergrounds were a reflection of a real societal split existing at that time, which has more or less mended itself. The split still exists, but much of the counterculture has been co-opted by the mainstream. It wasn't as if the counterculture got destroyed or disappeared, it was just absorbed back into the mainstream...

GB: It's the syndrome of the drugstore cowboy and designer jeans. Let me switch the focus here for a moment: Is there some particular element, an experimental or educational factor, or maybe a personality factor that would make a given person aspiring to write for comics successful in doing that? Say, a visual sense or way of thinking?

FRIEDRICH: I haven't had to think about that in a long time.

GB: Some of these questions are bound to reach back to antidilluvian times.

FRIEDRICH: You need a strong visual instinct. I think you need a strong sense of analysis, too. I think you have to have a way of putting distance between yourself and your work to understand what you're doing. To be really good at creating anything you're going to have to know that you're developing a skill. It's not just an instinct. There is a vision involved, but most of it is hard work. It's really understanding you have to have a certain amount of words per panel, otherwise there're too many words. There's got to be a flow from one panel to another, one page to another, one sequence to another. They've got to hold together. There are things you really have to study. You have to look and see how other people have done it, how it works, and decide how you want to do it yourself. So it is really something that requires some intelligence.

One of the overlooked aspects of comics writing is an ability to write in general: what works in writing for any genre. You have to understand what plots are, what story structures are, and what various narratives are; things that exist in all forms of literature.

A lot of people that write comics have no understanding or background in other forms of literature. Or if they do, they think in terms of other pop culture literature: adventure science fiction and sword and sorcery romances, without having done any real, serious study of literature itself. The more literate one is in this sense, the more educated one is, and the better one is going to be in writing for the comics.

I'm not trying to put down pop culture. I enjoy it. I think it's worthwhile for society. But I do think there has to be intelligence behind it for it to be as valuable as it can be.

GB: In other words, grounding in any particular popular medium, learning its standards and guidelines for quality, is contingent upon knowing the standards and guidelines of traditional forms of literature, the basics of communicating.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, of course; writing is a communications skill. Now, there are specifics about the comics medium that need to be learned. You may be a tremendous movie writer and know a lot about movies and how they are paced, (and there is a tremendous amount of overlap between movie-thinking and comics-thinking), but by virtue of the fact that the comics page is *stationary*, it doesn't move, it creates a difference. You have to change things for the medium. We've had many people with backgrounds in other mediums that have not really been able to succeed too well in comics.

There are some that *have* crossed over. There is a guy named Alan Brennert who has been doing some recent writing for DC Comics. He did a Batman story in *Detective #500*. He's a television writer. I was very impressed with the very quick grasp that he had of the comics form. He was able to make the transition very smoothly.

GB:That was a good job, as I recall. Another story in that particular issue that stood out in my mind was the Elongated Man story (by Mike W. Barr), because it required a certain amount of hard-core research. Not everyone takes into consideration the fact that, at times, particularly when you're writing a period piece: a western or a Rip Hunter time travel story, you have to have some knowledge of how to go about researching for it. You don't just sit down and fabricate a bunch of "facts."

FRIEDRICH: That's the other key to writing: having experience, either direct or indirect, on which you can draw. Indirect experience is listening to people and doing research; listening to people you talk to and meet; keeping a good ear for how people talk, what happens in people's

lives. Then you play the "what if..." game: Wouldn't it be interesting if "she" had met "him"; what a pair that would have made, what a scene that would have been. Then you create a story about them. Certainly imagining a story in another historical context or another cultural context would also be fascinating.

I believe it's the lack of this kind of research and the lack of this kind of listening, study and literacy that holds back the medium. Anyone who has studied even the last 15 years in comics has got to recognize the phenomenal turnover in talent that has occurred in the field. There are also economic reasons for this, but mainly editorial reasons: editorial restrictions placed by the comics companies on creative talent. If they're talented and they do grow, there's not a lot of area for them to grow into. There's more now than there was ten years ago. We now have other kinds of publications other than books with basic "beat-'em-up" superheroes. But it's still restricted in many ways.

GB: Editorial restraints are holding the medium back from evolving in a postivie direction?

FRIEDRICH: I believe that that's a major problem. I also believe that part of the problem lies with the creators themselves. If they paid more attention to doing it, I think there could be ways that they could stretch the form. There are now many more economical alternatives for exercising their talent. I think the field is held back by their lack of skill.

Most people...and I certainly count myself in this category when I came into the field...are really just acting out their own fantasies when they first break in: "Hey, I would really love to see Batman do this." But after a couple of years you run out of those fantasies. If you had really great fantasies and a kind of raw skill, you could get by on that. But once you've fulfilled that fantasy, you either have to have the kind of life that creates new fantasies or you have to train yourself to develop that kind of life. A lot of people don't and they wind up either recycling what they've already done, or they get frustrated and get out of it altogether. I think this is an area in which I do fault a lot of the creators in the comics field: for not having the breadth of experience that would be more valuable to them as writers and artists in comics.

GB: Is it purely dysfunction of the imagination or ingenuity? What makes the fantasy burn out?

FRIEDRICH: I'm speaking here of the insularity of the comics field: it kind of feeds on itself. People grow up wanting to be Neal Adams, and they draw like Neal Adams. Then they wind up stuck there. They don't become aware of pre-Raphaelites, for instance.

Frank Miller is a real hot artist right now in the comics field. I love his work. Dave Sim is another guy whose work I very much enjoy. Both of these people admit quite openly that their work is completely derivative of things that have gone before. Miller is doing Bernie Krigstein. It's just that Krigstein's work is 30 years old as far as most people's awareness of it goes, so most people don't know about him. So it's "fresh" and "new" now. And of course Sim is there ripping off Smith's work and everybody else's quite consciously. It's satire. Smith himself became a recognized talent within the field because he'd brought in a lot of things a particular group of painters had done 70 years before that nobody in the comics field knew anything about. Still, it was very derivative. He was just taking something already done and applying it to a different medium, which takes talent. You need more of that. You need people that will, if nothing else, steal from everything. Too much of what is done in comics is stealing from other comics.

GB: So if you're borrowing from one medium to expand the vistas of another...

FRIEDRICH: I find that valid. I enjoy that. To

me, modern rock music and comics are connected, although nobody has ever been able to tie them together. I mean, no one does comics material on record and nobody does music in comics form. Yet somehow or other, it connects in some way.

I'll jump to the other side of the fence: sometimes the market itself does not respond to new influences. I had a personal experience in which I published the work of Howard Chaykin who developed from a fairly traditional illustrative Neal Adams style, into someone whose experience was more with advertising art techniques. Now his work more resembles that of Bob Peak, who does *TV Guide* and *Time Magazine* covers; movie poster. Yet, Chaykin's work is not very well received in the comics marketplace anymore, because he's not "comics." He's a whole different thing to people. I'm bothered by that kind of conservatism on the part of the audience. They've come to expect this one clearly defined cliche as what comics are about. Words and pictures to me have balance, and that's all that comics are: just words and pictures. If they flow, if they make sense, if they speak to my life, *that's* "comics." I want to see it done in as many ways as can be done.

GB: I've heard art professors at universities tell their students that they shouldn't really try to be original, because no one will accept their work. In regard to borrowing from one medium to expand another, when you were writing comics did you ever have any desire to adapt something from another medium to the one you were working in?

FRIEDRICH: Things like that would come along, and then they would never happen. There was a point at which I wanted to take *Beowulf* and put it into comics form. I'm still going to do that someday. Now I would probably rather package or publish it than create it. When I first became exposed to Michael Moorcock's material, particularly his *Elric* stories, I was fascinated by that and wanted to adapt it. That is an aspiration I stuck with, but now I'm actually producing rather than adapting it. I've gotten other people to do it...Roy Thomas and Craig Russell.

I think this is reflecting more of a change in myself. There was never a movie I wanted to do. I always felt that, as far as comics material was concerned, there was more potential that was going unused. Even within the framework of preestablished characters there was a lot of potential that had not been completely realized. I was one of the second-level people that the idea was transforming the Batman from a sort of slapstick, average costume character of the mid-60s into a tremendous creative potential in having a character with some really severe internal conflicts, and showing how that would relate to other characters he dealt with. That's literature, that's what life is about. I really didn't get too much of a chance to do any of that myself, and there's still a part of me that would like to.

GB: Who determines how far an established character can be developed?

FRIEDRICH: The editors. That is really an editorial decision. A writer can push a character's development, but not past the boundaries set by the editor. If an editor says, "No, you cannot do that," you cannot. You'll have a tug of war, and frequently things will change over editorial misgivings, or even some editorial opposition, but they won't change for long unless the editor changes his mind as well. If it changes and the editor doesn't think it's a good idea, then eventually it's going to wind up back the way it was. The editors are generally the people who have that responsibility. They, of course, report to publishers, who have some editorial ideas of their own, but it's primarily what the editors want to see that determines what gets in.

GB: Is it the editors, then, that determine the particular *style* used for writing? Reporters, for example, use an AP Stylebook, slightly revised according to the guidelines set down for a particular newspaper. I know DC has a particular set of stylistic guidelines for their anthology books. Do they have a similar set of guidelines for books with continuing characters?

FRIEDRICH: It's never been actually written down. I understand Marvel is developing a style guide, and I'm not surprised. There's been an informal, unwritten one for quite a long time; many, many years. But it was never really specifically laid out. Again, that's an editorial function.

GB: Were the *Star Reach* books critically well received when they first came out?

FRIEDRICH: I think I received three reviews in six years, so I wouldn't really know how to evaluate that. You're a critic; you tell me.

GB: Wasn't the idea behind it to show what would happen if creative people had control of a creatively oriented medium?

FRIEDRICH: That was initially what we were attempting. I quickly discovered that a lot of creative people didn't know how to deal with that control and that freedom. The way things wound up, the longer I was publishing the more restrictions I put on accepting work. I think it was to the improvement of my publications that I developed a little bit more of an editorial vision. In many ways, the books I did towards the end of my publishing were less commercially successful, although I felt it was editorially more successful. I lost a tremendous amount of money publishing *Parsifal*, which was one of the best things I did. I admired Lee Marrs' work as it developed, especially towards the end in the "Stark's Quest"

series that she did, which was very, very original and very entertaining.

GB: You wrote the "Wooden Ships on the Water" story in *Star Reach #3*, didn't you?

FRIEDRICH: I talked about trying to get music and comics to come together; that story was my modest attempt. I never really had any idea whether it worked or not. Steve Leialoha did the art.

GB: There were some beautiful things in the *Star Reach* books, and I'm sure the commercial comics artists that participated in the project enjoyed working with it. Sometimes you can tell through the work whether someone is enjoying what they're doing.

FRIEDRICH: I was trying for that; trying to get that kind of feeling into the material. I was paying contributors virtually no money at all. The funds available to pay the creators was miniscule. I was trying to at least get them pleased in doing the work itself; having a chance to do something interesting with their creativity. And I do think that, with many of them, that did come across, sometimes more successfully than others.

(The discussion shifts to the subject of collaborations and why sometimes, even given greater freedom of license, the work manages to fall short of expectation. The particular subject being discussed was the Don McGregor/Marshall Rogers collaboration for Eclipse, *Detectives, Inc.*)

FRIEDRICH: It all depends on what you expect from a story to begin with. If someone is doing a story for Marvel Comics or DC Comics you already know what you're buying even before you open the covers. You know what the formula is, so you evaluate the material based on how well the artist and writer perform within those restrictions. When someone does something outside that formula, then you start broadening your expectations, applying the work to a larger, greater standard. And it's the greater standard that *Detectives, Inc.* falls very, very short. If DC had published that story they would have been praised to high heaven. Readers would've said it was the best thing they'd ever done, and I would've joined them.

GB: From your experience as an editor yourself, did you come away from your publishing venture with a different view, or more or less respect for the editorial policymakers of the commercial comics companies?

FRIEDRICH: Given my current position at Marvel that's a hard one to answer. I'm afraid the answer is no. I believe I've come away with a greater disrespect. Most of the mainstream companies now, even more than at any time in the past, are working in a more confined framework. They're all part of larger conglomerates. Therefore, people that are running the show at the companies are looking for bottom-line results more than ever, and that creates a very conservative tendency to do what has been done before, because we know we make at least this amount of money if we do it this way. Spoke straightforwardly or not, it's there. The editor's job is to continue to impose the status quo. I consider myself a good personal friend of many editors in mainstream comics. I really don't feel that is what *should* be done with their positions, and those kinds of restrictions are unnecessary for commercial success.

This is why I involve myself so heavily on the business side of the field. I've had a goal all along, and I can't answer why this is, but I've always felt that there should be better comics. I don't know why I have this fixation, but something in me says there should be better comic books. Maybe it's because comics were my lifeline to the world when I was 15 years old.

I had always worked within the editorial sphere to get improvements done, and then I worked within the editorial sphere as an independent publisher, and had to stop due to what amounted to market pressures. That's a whole different story. But I began to realize that the restraints on creativity in the editorial world were restraints created by business pressures. So I've devoted a great deal of my more recent career to getting a handle on that in order to change it. I'm doing a lot of that today, in a long-term sense. This is not my day-to-day job, but in helping to promote specialty stores and the kinds of distributors that service these specialty stores, I've discovered that

there tends to be a correlation between good sales and good material. This is starting to create an economic pressure for higher quality. It's only in the beginning stages, but it's now very true that if the comics publishers, meaning the higher executives, wish to go out there with a higher quality product, they can now have some assurance that they're going to receive more money back for the greater investment that they have to make to get that higher quality product. I'm encouraged by that direction.

GB: I'm surprised that this is the first time there's ever been a direct correlation between quality and better sales. If I don't misunderstand what you're doing, you're going out into the field to talk with collectors...

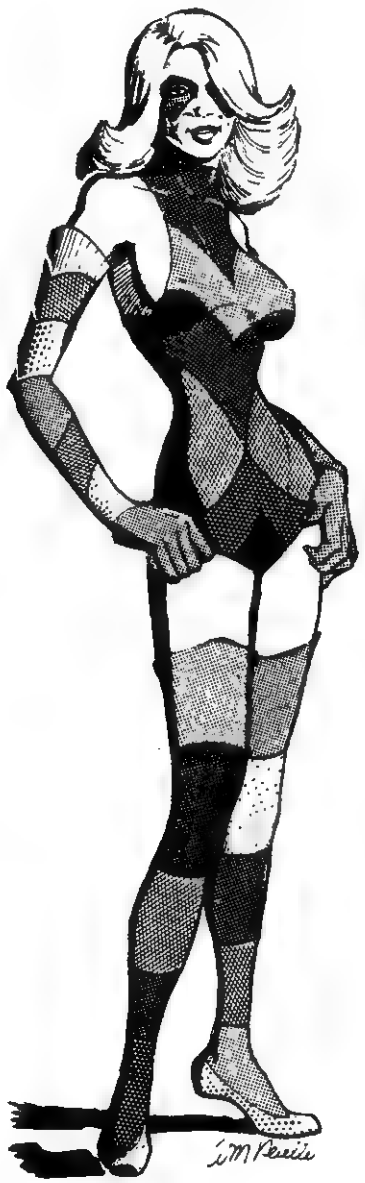
FRIEDRICH: Yes I am, but I have to counteract a misimpression that's beginning to grow about what's going on. What I'm trying to do is further the process of efficient distribution. I grew up buying comics, and I bought the good ones and didn't buy the bad ones. I knew the difference. I was 12 years old; I knew everything. I now discover that one of the reasons I was able to make that determination was because I was in an area where the local distributor gave good, efficient service supplying comics. Every Tuesday the comics would actually be out there at the drugstore, just like the ad at the bottom of the page would promise.

I have since discovered that the majority of distribution is not anything like that. It's horrendous. What specialty distribution is doing, is bringing that kind of efficiency to the entire country. And while their base is the specialty store which focuses on comics, there are two things: First, they're not just supplying specialty stores, they're supplying all kinds of outlets, book stores, convenience stores, record stores, and I ran into one guy who's selling comics out of his dry cleaning store. Second, the people that come in to even the specialty stores are not collectors when they walk in the door. They're just readers who then become fans. It's efficient distribution that creates the fans, not the fans creating the stores.

It is my belief that if you make comics available to the people in this country, they will read them. It's now a matter of trying to create the distribution channels that will get the comics to the people so they will spend the money and read them. Because comics are better than television. There is a danger too, in that sense, in that we now have some pretty fierce competition from the movies. And television is not going to remain stagnant for long. The technology for doing all kinds of thing in TV has been there, but the money hasn't been there. Now there are new distribution channels for televisions: cable, satellite transmissions. The print media has really got to work on keeping one step ahead of all that. *Superman the Movie* is far better than *Superman* the comic book, as is *Star Wars.* It is possible to elicit great imagination on the part of the reader of a comic book. I believe that. But we really have to push and pay people, reward them for doing that.

GB: Do you do a lot of traveling for Marvel?

FRIEDRICH: Yes part of my job *is* going out on the road. That's why I'm here in the St. Louis area. Part of my current job is to keep in touch with distributors directly, and secondarily to meet with retail owners and individual fans. I visit them on purpose, though, in order to keep in touch with what's doing on all the way down the marketing stream. I need to talk to a store owner who tells me, "I don't know *why* they like *X-Men* this month, but they really do." And then a fan standing by will chime in, "Well, the inking was really powerful this month; last month it was no good." That kind of comment is something sales



people frequently aren't set up to hear, and don't know what to do with even when they *do* hear it. I go back to New York and I go into the editor's office, and I tell them "I heard *this* in St. Louis and you ought to listen to it."

GB: Sounds as if the channels for communication are opening up; that they're actually seeking direct response from all levels.

FRIEDRICH: For me personally, it's very helpful. And it enable me to have a better grasp of the market so that I'm able to provide Marvel with a lot of information they can choose to use or not. I hope they do use it, because if they do they'll produce better comics and make more money. If they don't it'll still be valuable information for me personally, should I decide I want to do something else other than work for my current employer.

GB: What is your title?

FRIEDRICH: I'm manager of direct sales. They actually write that as manager/direct sales. Subsequent to my hiring, DC Comics is bringing in a couple of people to work in similar capacity right now. I'm the whole department and I'm not even a department. I'm just part of the circulation department, but I'm responsible for this area myself. I have some backup in dealing with some of the paperwork, but in terms of creating policy and doing the field work, it's all my job. Someday it may be worthwhile for the company to have a full-time field force, but at this point it isn't justifiable. On the other hand, DC is hiring a full-time field representative to go out starting this summer.

GB: Is it someone we're familiar with?

FRIEDRICH: Paul Kupperberg from Chicago, who has done some writing for DC before. They have a guy named Rober Slifer who is already on staff at DC dealing with direct sales and promotion.

GB: You've already mentioned that you've found a correlation between quality and good sales. Could you share some of your other findings?

FRIEDRICH: Certainly there is a major identification with the characters: the Marvel characters, the DC characters. They have a reputation of their own. I think, if I can jump into your head, that one of the reasons you, as a reader, appreciated Frank Brunner's work in *Star Reach* was because you identified it with the work he did for Marvel Comics prior to his working for me. If that same artist had done that job but had not had prior Marvel experience, you probably would have been less receptive to it.

In my opinion I've published work aesthetically better than the work done by the people with Marvel backgrounds, but the response to it was somewhat less because the others didn't have Marvel or DC association. So, it *is* true, especially with Marvel, and to a lesser degree with DC, that

there is this market leadership that cannot be ignored.

Marvel is an excellent position to capitalize on the situation, and they are. We're moving into many different kinds of formats now, because we realize that if we put Marvel on it we can sell anything or at least we can get it into the store. If Joe Blow puts out a comic or a book, he's not necessarily guaranteed he's going to get it into the store regardless of the quantity. Or it has to be of such superior quality it gets in, and even then it may take a much longer time.

I think there's going to be a lot more sensitivity towards treatment of talent. The readers are aware of the difference between Dr. Strange and Spider-Man. They're also aware of the difference between Marshall Rogers and John Romita, and John Byrne and Neal Adams. Different talent creates a different response. you'll look for work by Frank Brunner and Jim Starlin. You'll look for work by John Byrne and you'll buy it because you'll associate his name with good work. So once a talent has established itself in the market they start becoming an independent force. The "Art of John Byrne" published by Sal Quartuccio can be a phenomenally successful publication because John Byrne has developed a reputation apart from the characters he draws. This is happening more and more. And the companies are aware of this too. Of course, the mainstream companies are aware that if they merge the two: combine the charac-

ters, the properties *they* own, with the talent that exists, they can create an even more profitable product.

GB: When a particular talent becomes identifiable with a given property or strip, then you're running into a parallel of Hollywood's star system.

FRIEDRICH: That's very true. It's developing very much into a star system. There are good and bad aspects of that. The Hollywood stars helped break open a good deal of the oppressive economic problems that Hollywood had, and it's now a much wider field for making a profit for everybody involved in movies than it was prior to that. And I think this is starting to happen in the comics. If a particular talent doesn't like the deal he's been getting from the company, he can switch to the other company. The company is beginning to be aware that it's worth their while to make a better deal to keep the creators happy. I believe this is going to change the field to the better.

GB: We're pretty familiar with who, among the stable of artists at both companies would be considered "stars." What about writers? Are there any writers of comics material who would have acquired similar followings through the caliber of *their* work?

FRIEDRICH: Writing is generally something that has been overlooked. My experience is that people are still primarily looking for artists. There is some recognition of some writers, suggesting that these people are as responsible for the interest of a given strip as the artist is. Right now there are only two or three that I think could be pinpointed, which would be Chris Claremont, Roy Thomas at Marvel, perhaps Len Wein.

GB: Denny O'Neil?

FRIEDRICH: I don't think so, at least not any more. I think Steve Engelhart has built up something of a following, though he's just now starting to do comics work again for Eclipse Productions. We'll see if that continues.

It's the storytelling that counts, and very frequently success in that area is because the artist is a good storyteller. Frequently, it's because the writer is a good storyteller. Frequently, it's because the two work well together. Frank Miller was a very good artist and storyteller. When he started doing his own scripts response multiplied three times. People don't think of Frank Miller as a writer, but he is, and he's one of the better ones right now. Dave Sim's *Cerebus* succeeds because it is so well written. Wendi and Richard Pini's *Elfquest* succeeds because it is so well written, and yet you don't think of it in that sense. I believe the continued success of the *X-Men* is due to Chris Claremont's focus on the writing. It's gone through three different artists and the consistency and quality of writing has maintained its level of popularity, the interest of the readers.

GB: Speaking of the *X-Men*, didn't someone tell me about a discussion you had with Dave Cockrum which had a bearing on the revival of the *X-Men*?

FRIEDRICH: That's one of those crazy little stories about the way the new *X-Men* got created; one of those little background things that never popped up in public, because nobody cares until years after they've been around.

Then all of a sudden, these books are *the* collector's items everyone is looking for. It's only now that there's any real focus on delving back into how the whole thing got started.

It was around 1972 I think...Cockrum would remember more exactly. He was not working for Marvel at the time. I think he was still doing *Legion of Superheroes* over at DC, and was getting dissatisfied with it. He created this group of characters. He had sketches of them and some idea of what their powers were. Even the costumes had been worked out. I remember seeing them and being very excited about it. I set up a lunch meeting for him and Roy Thomas and myself, Roy being the editor-in-chief at Marvel at that time. It was at that meeting that Roy got introduced to the material, and I stepped out of it at that point after having helped him with initial connection. It was then that Roy and Dave got the thing going. It sat around for a long time and never got started. It wasn't until six months or a year later that the thing finally started getting published. People forget that Roy had been involved in it at all because he'd quit his editor-in-chief post by the time it was actually out. But he was actually going to write the series, or the first issue or two. Then it was going to get turned over to me. That was originally his thought on it. Then Roy quit and Len Wein became the editor and Len assigned himself to write the series, and that's how the thing got started with Len and Dave. Then Len dropped off and Chris came on. Chris was a complete unknown at that time. But he just plugged away on it, and the thing slowly snowballed up to the point at which it became what it is now.

THE INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

Book/Movie/Book/Movie by James Van Hise

So now we have two of them. The same title. Based on the same book. But different movies at heart, and certainly different movies in execution.

There has been much dicussion about the sociological overtones of the first film (such as in *Cinefantastique* Vol. 2 #33 Winter 1973), and although these observations did exist in the first film in an implicit way, they were magnified in explicit ways in the second film.

But where did this story originate, a story of such power and interest that it has spawned two different film versions in twenty-five years? Obviously the source is Jack Finney's novel *THE BODY SNATCHERS* which appeared in a shorter version in *Colliers* in 1954 and then as a novel in 1955. The first film version was released in 1956.

Almost without exception, whenever a film is made based on a novel, major changes are made, which makes one wonder why the producers ever bothered to buy the property to begin with if they were going to tamper with it. Anyway this deed is just as true regarding *THE BODY SNATCHERS* as it is with most every fantasy or science fiction novel which has ever been optioned, the only exception being Ira Levin's novel *ROSEMARY'S BABY* which is 98% identical with the film version, even to the exact dialogue. But this is clearly an exception which Levin himself would be the first to admit. In fact, in a recent interview he discussed how dismayed he was when William Castle bought the film rights, and how happy he was when Castle called him to explain why he wasn't going to direct it himself but was instead going to have someone named Roman Ploansky do it.

Thus reading *THE BODY SNATCHERS* one encounters yet a third version beyond the two films. A version with a climax which is totally different from either of the cinematic interpretations. But in comparison, the novel is still much closer to the first film in regards to specific scenes and characters while only superficially resembling the 1978 remake. The book has all the familiar characters from director Don Siegel's 1956 film, but where the principals go and what they do departs dramatically from where Siegel and his screenwriter, Daniel Mainwaring, saw them heading. The book aims more at suspense and tension, whereas Siegel's film aims more towards achieving subtle horror and the terror of alienation from people one has known and loved. Although both film versions strip away the main character's friends one by one until he alone remains, this doesn't happen in the book. Becky does not become one of the pod people in the climax of the book, nor does he lose his friend Jack and Jack's wife to this unhuman fate. They escape and the book actually has a complete and total resolution of the situation. In fact, it is because of Miles Bennell's resistence and attacks on the pod-people that he overcomes the menace once and for all. There is also a reference that it was probably due to other pockets of resistence as well that he succeeded, but it seems that it is his act of attacking a farm where pods are being grown, and burning many of them, which causes the remainder of the pods in the field to respond by uprooting and drifting up into the sky and back into space to search for another world. This curious group intelligence admits defeat and leaves those who have already taken over human bodies trapped on Earth to die. You see, the book actually delves into the origin of the pods and reveals that there are more reasons to resist them than just the unpleasant trait of becoming incapable of feeling any sort of emotion. The pod's imitation human life may be duplicated cell by cell, but it is an imperfect duplication because the new bodies are sterile, plus they die after five years.

The origin and actual nature of the pods is presented in chapter sixteen of the novel as

follows:

"As you surmised, the pods are, in a sense, seed pods, though not in the sense that we know seeds. But in any case, they are living matter, capable, just as are seeds, of enormous and complex growth and development. And they did drift through space, the original ones, anyway, over enormous distances, and through millenniums of time, just as I told you. Though of course"—he smiled in polite apology—"I tried to phrase it in a way to cast doubt over the notion. They live, however; they arrived on this planet by pure chance, but having arrived, they have a function to perform, as natural to them as yours are to you. And that's why you must go through with the change; the pods must fulfill their function, their reason for being."

"And what's their function?" I said sarcastically.

Budlong shrugged. "The function of all life everywhere—to survive." For a moment he stared at me. "Life exists throughout the universe, Doctor Bennell; most scientists know that, and willingly admit it; it has to be true, though we've never before encountered it. But it's there, infinite distances away, in every conceivable and inconceivable form, since it exists under enormously varied conditions. Consider, Doctor, that there are planets and life incalculably older than ours; what happens when an ancient planet finally dies? The life form on it must reckon with and prepare for that fact—to survive."

Budlong sat forward in his chair, staring at me, fascinated by what he was saying. "A planet dies," he repeated, "Slowly and over immeasurable ages. The life form on it—slowly and over immeasurable ages—must prepare. Prepare for what? There is no answer, but one; which they achieved. It is universal adaptability to *any and all other life forms, under any and all other conditions they might possibly encounter.*"

Later, in chapter seventeen, the nature of the pod duplicates is explored even further and we find that with the loss of emotion also comes the loss of any desire whatsoever, including the desire to create, to write, anything like that, so that all the pods wish to do is duplicate and live and after five years when their human forms have died, the pods will move on to other planets, so the only point to their existence is existence, and the pod people themselves fail to understand what's wrong with that.

It is easy to see how the film-makers were able to draw parallels from this to the lives of many people today who lead empty lives devoid of any usefulness, who do their jobs, raise families, but in the long run, to borrow a line from Charles Beaumont's script to *The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao*, "For all the good or evil you may have done, you might just as well not have lived at all."

This comments on how empty people have become out of habit, and retreat, rather than embrace life because, to take a line from the first film, "Worry about what's going on in the world." This was more subtle in the first film, whereas in the second film it is more obvious and is stated directly by Leonard Nimoy as Doctor David Kibner, a character created for the second film.

In Don Siegel's film, he consciously saw the pods as what a lot of people were becoming, that being those who preferred a regimented life where they did not have to make up their own minds or face decisions. This is a very real threat he saw facing society, in which many people no longer dreamed, or looked for personal challenges or had that spark which occupies only that small percentage of people like artists and writers who want to do so much more than just exist. What Siegel saw 25 years ago has become even more true today with fewer and fewer people reading and many preferring the soporific delight of watching television all night after they get home from work. They put their life into a pattern and resent any departure from it, but more, the pattern they choose requires no effort on their part.

This is one of the things I've always found interesting about fandom, because most fans are searching for new forms of mental excitement and ways of looking at things, and such diversions are offered in fanzines and the books and films they discuss and recommend. There is a passion in fandom. A search for new things. Unfortunately some people find that this path leads them to the dead end of drugs, but others are agile enough to avoid that particular retreat into podism. Fandom is a place to exchange thoughts and ideas in a meaningful way, as opposed to the on-the-job-

environment discovered in department stores, offices and factories where people look at you askance if you talk about reading books or even writing stories.

There has long been some controversy over the framing sequence of the original film, in that the writer and the director opposed it but the studio demanded it be added because of bad reactions from preview audiences. I'm afraid that I'm going to have to depart from popular opinion and vote for the framing sequence for some of the very reasons the director had against it. First, it sets off the drama from word one, which is an approach I'm rather fond of. Right from the start we know something terrible is happening, and then comes the slow buildup and explanation. In this way I feel that the mood of tension is established immediately while we thereafter sit back and watch the story unfold in a fashion which comes across as being much more interesting. In this way the introduction of characters and events doesn't seem like a departure from the drama as the drama has been established so now we're waiting to understand what it's all about and we accept the need for the seemingly trivial events of the beginning of the story and we understand that they aren't trivial or time wasters at all. This is the problem with many films and books. There is a lot of dead air before the drama and action begins, or at least it comes across as dead air. If a sense of tension had been established by some event right at the beginning, we find what follows thereafter to be a bit more interesting. It's a simple yet effective director's trick which I'm surprised Don Siegel would resist because it makes the *storytelling* that much more effective, whether the story is told in a movie or a book. Remember the opening of *Jaws*?

I also liked the ending employing the framing device because it was more satisfying and was packed with a lot more tension than just seeing Kevin McCarthy running into the camera saying, "You're next!" To me that would have seemed too contrived and not satisfying from a storytelling standpoint.

One of the few things I liked about the 1978 remake was the inclusion of Kevin McCarthy doing that very thing near the beginning of the film when he runs up to Donald Sutherland's cracked windshield screaming, "Help me! You're next! Please, please! You're next! You're in danger! Something Terrible!" In saluting the original film, this scene can almost be taken in context to mean that the 1978 version is actually a sequel to the original, albeit with a very similiar plot.

On the whole, though, I wasn't at all happy with this new version. I felt it was rather forced in its approach in handling the characters who in the original seemed more relaxed and realistic. The characters all seemed like actors rather than real people. Also I find it unfortunate that Veronica Cartwright (who also appeared in *Alien*) has been typecast into roles where she invariably screams and shrieks and comes across as an altogether unpleasant personality. As soon as you see her in a film you know she's going to do it and it's all rather tiring, especially when she's the only person who carries on in the film in such an extreme fashion.

I also feel that the directing went for the easy way of achieving mood in that most of the film is shot at night whereas the original achieved a much more effective atmosphere by having much of it shot in daylight where the horror was not shrouded in darkness but was in the great outdoors where it seemed much more eerie because of the incongruous setting which went against type. The directing just seemed all together slack and sluggish to me. The film did not frighten me in any respect, nor did I even find it the least bit tense even though I can still watch the original and get caught up in the suspense and the action even though I know it all so well. The ending of the remake was also no surprise even though for some reason the director seemed to think it would be. It was clear that Matthew Bennell had been captured and this was underscored when we saw him back at his regular job acting like nothing had happened because everyone knew he wasn't one of them, therefore he couldn't possibly have been hiding out in plain sight. This made the ending rather contrived and obvious and ho-hum. At least the special effects were nice, but other than that and the little scene with the dog with the banjo player's face, it was a pretty lackluster effort. Sorry.

In conjunction with the remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Jack Finney updated and slightly revised his novel, although the changes made are mostly in regards to dates and names which would have placed the story squarely in the Fifties, as well as changing a word here and there.

But this brings us back full circle, as well as to a point that I don't recall ever having seen discussed much at all. The inspiration of Jack Finney's original story.

In 1951, Robert Heinlein wrote a book called *THE PUPPET MASTERS*. It's not considered one of his major works, but neither is it a bad book. I just read it and it holds up extremely well as a solid science fiction adventure story about an invasion of creatures from another world who take over human beings and control their bodies. In this case the creatures are merely slugs, or intelligent parasites, who attach themselves to a person's back and take over the brain. The humans then become emotionless and their only object in life becomes helping the parasites find more hosts and extending their influence.

This story, though, takes place in 2007 and travel and communication is much more advan-

ced, which aids mankind in fighting the creatures as well as aiding the aliens in fighting mankind. It is a much better than average "Help! We've been invaded!" story and in fact has some scenes which are downright chilling. The plot is very inventive and the characters are interesting and entertaining. Heinlein does not disappoint. The story has a lot of surprises in it, not the least of which is that the aliens become so desperate and clever that they even take over animals. The scene when a tiger comes charging out of the darkness and you realize that it is controlled by an alien intelligence is quite effective.

I don't think that Jack Finney stole anything from *THE PUPPET MASTERS*, but I do think that he may have seen or read it and wondered what it would be like if the invasion was more subtle and took place today? In both books the beachhead is in a small, out of the way town, but in Heinlein's novel the entire country and then the world becomes involved, whereas Finney keeps it very small and personal, keeping the battle on very claustrophobic terms which give it a greater sense of reality. Seeing the two different approaches to the same basic theme is interesting as they are handled in completely different ways.

Thus is the origin of a classic. A classic novel of suspense and science fiction, and a classic horror film which still manages to frighten children who first see it and even effect grownups. For instance, two years ago the film was shown one Saturday night on a Los Angeles TV station. The next morning in a small city not far from L.A., residents found huge pod-like growths lying in the street in the middle of town. It was chalked off as a prank since *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* had been shown on TV the night before and the remake had just been released. But it makes you wonder when you consider the closing lines of Jack Finney's novel. *"You read these occasional queer little stories, humorously written, tongue-in-cheek, most of the time: OR YOU HEAR VAGUE DISTORTED RUMORS OF THEM. And this much I know. Some of them—some of them—are quite true."*

INVASION
1956
OF THE
SNATCHERS
1978

JIM (THE BUTCHER) McDERMOTT
ED GEIN ESCAPES!
STEVE (THE AXEMAN) FIORILLA
SOMEBODY PLEASE STOP ME!
PAPERBACKS
I'D RATHER FIGHT THAN SWITCH
GUM
CANDY
MAGAZINES
CREEPY
VEWS
WEIRD TALES
EC

WEIRD TALES: BACK FROM THE DEAD AND NEEDING A FACELIFT

WEIRD TALES #1: Edited by Lin Carter-Zebra Books-$2.50

I'm probably as big a *WEIRD TALES* fan as anyone, but I still found this book to be a very inauspicious beginning as a revival of this time-honored title. Lin Carter has certainly proven his editing abilities in the past because even those who look with literary disfavor on his pale imitations of ERB and REH often speak highly of the books he brought into being under the imprint of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series. So what went wrong here?

WEIRD TALES was the cream of the weird fiction magazines, as well as being the only one which lasted long enough to develop any sort of heritage. It lasted thirty years and gave vibrant birth to the efforts of many now highly regarded fantasists, such as Lovecraft, Howard and many others including Henry Kuttner and Ray Bradbury. In an interview published in the March, 1980 issue of *SCIENCE FICTION TIMES*, Carter explained that by the fourth volumn of the revived *WEIRD TALES* that he would bridge the gap between the old writers who cause that magazine to be so fondly remembered, and the new writers who are writing this kind of weird fiction today. Why wait so long? As it is, in his diligence to dig up unpublished stories by the old familiars, he has sacrificed the most important principle of being an editor, that is that the story should be judged on its merits, first, and on who it's written by, second. In almost every case Carter has done the reverse and given us a lot of dreary stories which do anything but carry on the glowing reputation this magazine has come to have.

"Scarlet Tears" by Robert E. Howard is yet another previously unpublished story which does nothing to further Howard's own reputation and merely slides in unobtrusively among many other stories Howard wrote. This one details the exploits of an adventurer and his girlfriend fighting off oriental thugs who are after a jeweled necklace called the Scarlet Tears which was stolen by the girl's father in the orient. It takes place in the dead of night in a huge lonely mansion and climaxes in the thieve's grotto in a confrontation with the ancient, unhuman leader of the pack. Although a familiar enough plot, this one is a little better than many of Howard's other minor efforts although the weird element doesn't appear until the very end of the story. The rest of it is just chases and fights and people gasping out secrets with their dying breath. Not awful, but still pretty mediocre.

"Down There" by Ramsey Campbell is the kind of horror story which is done much better these days by Stephen King. A woman working late at night in an office building starts becoming suspicious about odd noises she hears and finally encounters bizarre gigantic white slug-like things prowling up from the basement. We never really find out what these things are or what their intent is other than being slimy, and when she escapes at the end we wonder what the point of it all was as there is no real plot, just an incident. There are lots of stories like this in the literature of horror fiction and it takes a lot of effort and development to make them interesting. This was not one of those cases.

"The Light From The Pole" by Clark Ashton Smith was an unpublished 3,000 word fragment which Lin Carter completed. Although I don't

care much for the literary grave-robbing which is so prevalent in fantasy fiction today, I'm surprised to say that I actually enjoyed this. Although the section where Smith ends and Carter begins is readily apparent, Carter gradually picks up Smith's style and approach and by the time the story ends we have been treated to an interesting, typical Clark Ashton Smith story. It's not great Smith, but it is good Smith, and that in itself is a difficult feat to manage. The plot is just another of Smith's ancient tales of a magician encountering a force beyond his mastery or understanding and all the surrounding weird occurences. Familiar, but still eminently interesting.

"Someone Named Guiborg" by Hannes Bok is a story about murder and racial memory. The premise requires that we believe that a dire deed perpetrated against a woman hundreds of years ago, is remembered instinctively by her descendants so vividly that they involuntarily seek out the man's male descendants to exact revenge. If this is so, one wonders how the man can continue to have descendants, but nonetheless it's an odd enough idea and makes for a weird, if not a very believable, story. The most interesting aspect of this story is that it is all told from the point of view of the younger brother of the woman who is possessed by this ancient drive for vengeance. Not a particularly strong story, but better than most in this book.

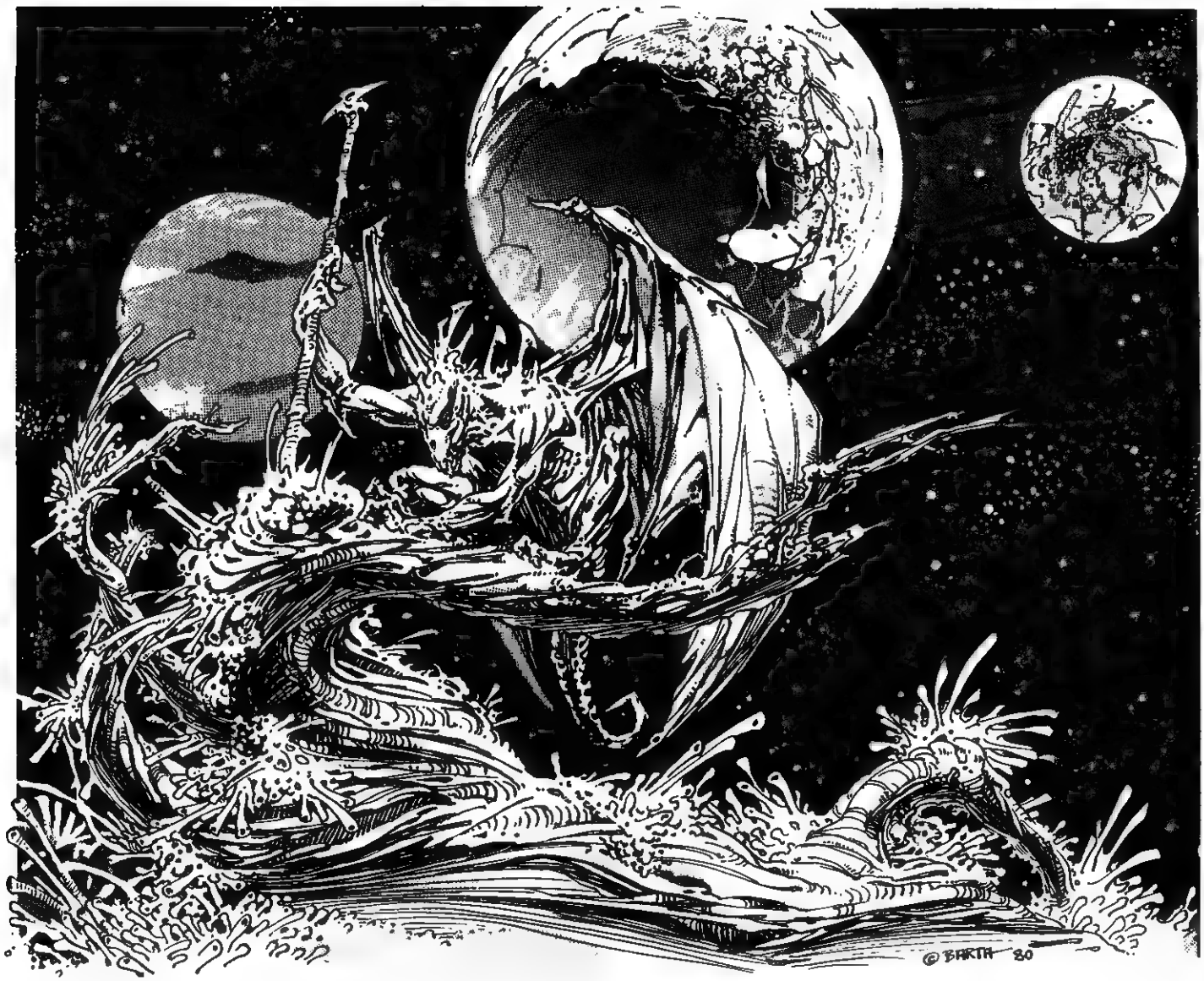
"Bat's Belfry" by August Derleth was his first published story in *WEIRD TALES* and has never before been reprinted. There is usually a very good reason for things like that and this story is no exception. This story uses as its format an approach which has long since been discredited because of its basic silliness; that is the diary form of storytelling in which we read what happened in the past tense and which climaxes with the protagonist describing in lurid detail his doom as it approaches, in this case from a family of vampires. This style has been satirized elsewhere with the line, "And the last thing I saw as the horror descended upon me was—the horror, *descending upon me!*" The main problem with this kind of storytelling is readily obvious, that being that no one in the history of the world has ever sat unmoving and writing down the violent fate which was only seconds away because any person in that situation would be too busy trying to fight it or escape to sit and write about it! This has only been done once successfully, and that was by Lovecraft in "The Haunter of the Dark," and by its very nature this approach does not bear up to being used twice. It has become silly quickly, and worse. I'm surprised Carter would dredge up a thing like this.

"The Pit" by Carl Jacobi is that old favorite about disturbing Indian burial grounds. That is to say that it's somebody's old favorite, but not mine. In this case it causes a man to go out and kidnap and murder in his sleep while he has no memories of these acts. The plot idea isn't bad, but nothing much is really done with it. Seeing everything from the point of view of a character who doesn't remember what he does makes for little action or suspense as most everything happens off-stage. It doesn't really fulfill the promise of being a weird tale.

"When The Clock Strikes" by Tanith Lee is the most skillful story in the book because it does imaginative things with an incredibly simple plot. About halfway through the story we suddenly realize that this is a dark and bizarre retelling of the story of "Cinderella" but with odd twists and turns. You will not believe that something like this could be done well unless you read it. It is the most genuinely weird tale in the book. Needless to say, Tanith Lee is not one of the old stand-by's, but is a new writer of extraordinary talent. She makes almost everything else in the book look pitiful by comparison.

"Some Day I'll Kill You" by Seabury Quinn is a reprint from *STRANGE STORIES*, a short-lived competitor of *WEIRD TALES*. It's a bit odd, especially when it requires us to believe that a supporting character would wait years to get the best of the protagonist by seducing her husband. The ending strikes me as rather formula and as much as I enjoy Quinn's Jules de Grandin stories, this non-series story just doesn't cut it with me. It's well-written, but the plot seems trite and contrived.

"Healer" by Mary Elizabeth Counselman surprised me as I thought I had it figured out as a very simple and straightforward story until it throws in a double-twist at the end with a climax



we didn't expect. It's a story about a woman who falls in love with a doctor who heals by being an empath. The ending is very interesting as a lot happens very quickly and leaves us feeling satisfied over the writer's imagination.

"The House Without Mirrors" by David H. Keller, M.D. would have us believe that a man would put up with a wife who would remember their marriage for only seven days and then require them to remarry, as if for the first time, every seven days for thirty-nine years! Finally one day she asks who this old guy is as *her* boyfriend is a young man, and she proceeds to run off to her room and hide. The catch is that she refused to have mirrors in the house and thus never saw herself age. The good doctor telling the story finally forces the woman to confront reality. David H. Keller was a psychiatrist who usually wrote psychological weird tales. This one struck me as being awfully silly.

"Dreams In The House Of Weir" is yet another hoary attempt at a new Cthulhu Mythos story, this time by Lin Carter. The only good idea in it is that when the protagonist dream-explores a far off planet, creatures there trace his thoughts and pursue him to Earth. Fine, but then it's just another big, white slug story of a man trapped in his house and the story is written in the diary format which I ground under my heel earlier in this review. The last entry in the diary is: *"The window!*—Merciful God, that FACE! Can anything that lives be so huge—" We are then told that the diary ended there. Need I say more? I will anyway. I dislike stories which inadvertantly turn into self-parodies.

That's it! Other than a couple pages of verse and a long introduction, that's all we get. Collections of short stories are supposed to save the strongest for last so that it ends on a strong note, but this one, instead of ending with a bang, ends with a grimace... from the reader.

—JVH

HAVE BROOM WILL TRAVEL

BROOM-HILDA: LIFE BEGINS AT 1500 by Russell Myers- Fawcett-1-4378-3-$1.50

As near as I can guess, this is the tenth *BROOM-HILDA* collection (they didn't start numbering the books until #3, and stopped numbering with #7).

BROOM-HILDA has been in existence since April 20, 1970 and has managed to maintain a consistently high level of creativity in both art and story. While most of the strips are amusing and entertaining, few delve into the berserk or off-color humor such as the strip printed on this page does. This particular strip is reprinted from *LIFE BEGINS AT 1500*, and while many of them made me smile, only this one made me laugh out loud because it crept up on me so unexpectedly and is a masterful use of visual humor as well. It's this kind of inspired lunacy that I'm sure the syndicate frowns upon. Evidence of that fact exists in Mark Evanier's article on *BROOM-HILDA* which appeared in *FANFARE #1*.

For those not fortunate enough to see the strip in your area, the title character is a short, fat, dumpy 1500 year old witch. Her cast of supporting players consists of Irwin, the naive and harmless troll, and Gaylord, the highly enducated, bombastic buzzard who often conceives stinging one-liners at Broom-Hilda's expense. My favorite supporting cast member, though, is Grelber, the squirrel who lives in a log. Grelber is never seen outside the log and his physical characteristics consist of two eyes and a toothy grin, not unlike a Cheshire Cat. Grelber's forte is the obnoxious insult and he takes great joy in seeing others succumb to his verbal harpoons (barb is too mild a description). His home is festooned with signs saying "Hate is Great" and "Free Insults." In one cartoon he mentally projects a nightmare into the sleeping minds of Irwin and Broom-Hilda and then grins his vile amusement. Due to the family-oriented nature of the comics page, Grelber does not appear real often, and in fact occupies only a couple pages in this book. I'd like to see a whole book of just Grelber!

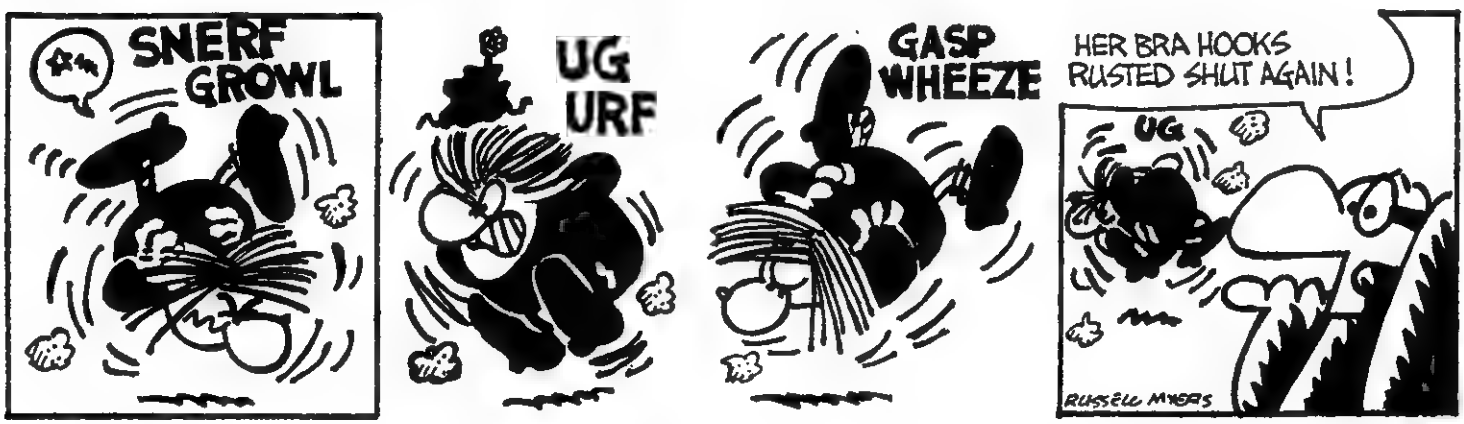
The subjects covered in Broom-Hilda encompass an almost limitless range and even sometimes step into social commentary. In *RBCC #151* I reprinted two strips dealing with the adverse effects of television, which I thought was just terrific. Whereas most humor comic strips tend to shun the real world as much as possible, Broom-Hilda toys with it when you least expect it.

The effectiveness of this strip was best exemplified to me when Russell Myers appeared at the 1973 New York Comic Art Convention and did a slide show presentation of Broom-Hilda along the same lines as the one Vaughn Bode had been doing at the same con. It was an entertaining show and transferred well into that medium. It's a shame he doesn't do this show anymore.

The characters in this strip occupy a habitat called the haunted forest, which, depending on story requirements, seems to be just a hop, skip and a jump from a medium-sized city as well as being within access of congressmen and oil shieks. The forest is drawn in a style one can only call peculiarly surreal, as the backgrounds often change from panel to panel, with cacti that may turn up in the background festooned with a fedora, as well as with trees that would be at home in *THE WIZARD OF OZ*. The Haunted Forest may not be a scary place, but it's certainly a bit on the other side of weird.

No, *BROOM-HILDA* is not your average humor strip. It asks a bit more of itself than that. Read and enjoy!

—JVH



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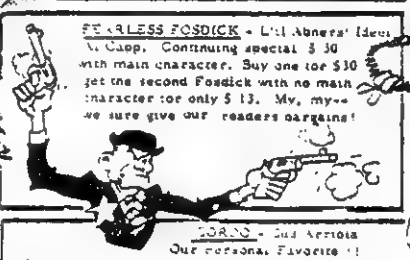

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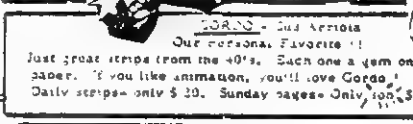

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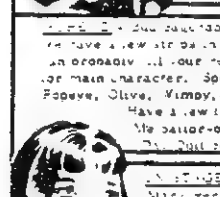

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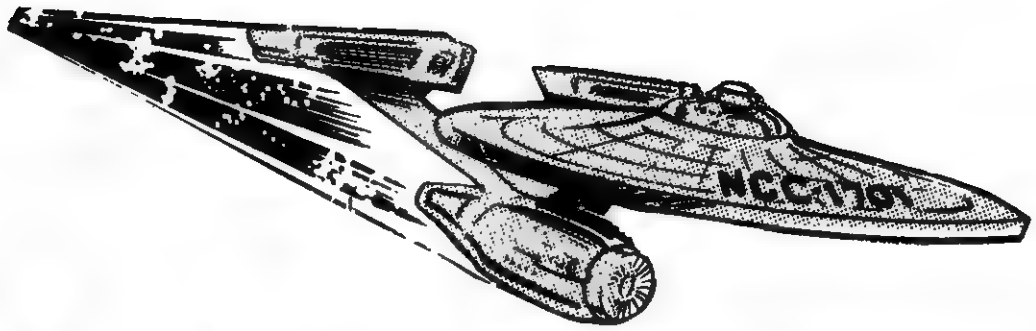

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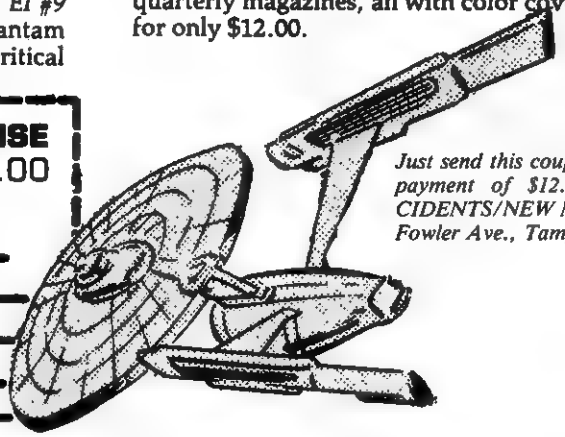

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